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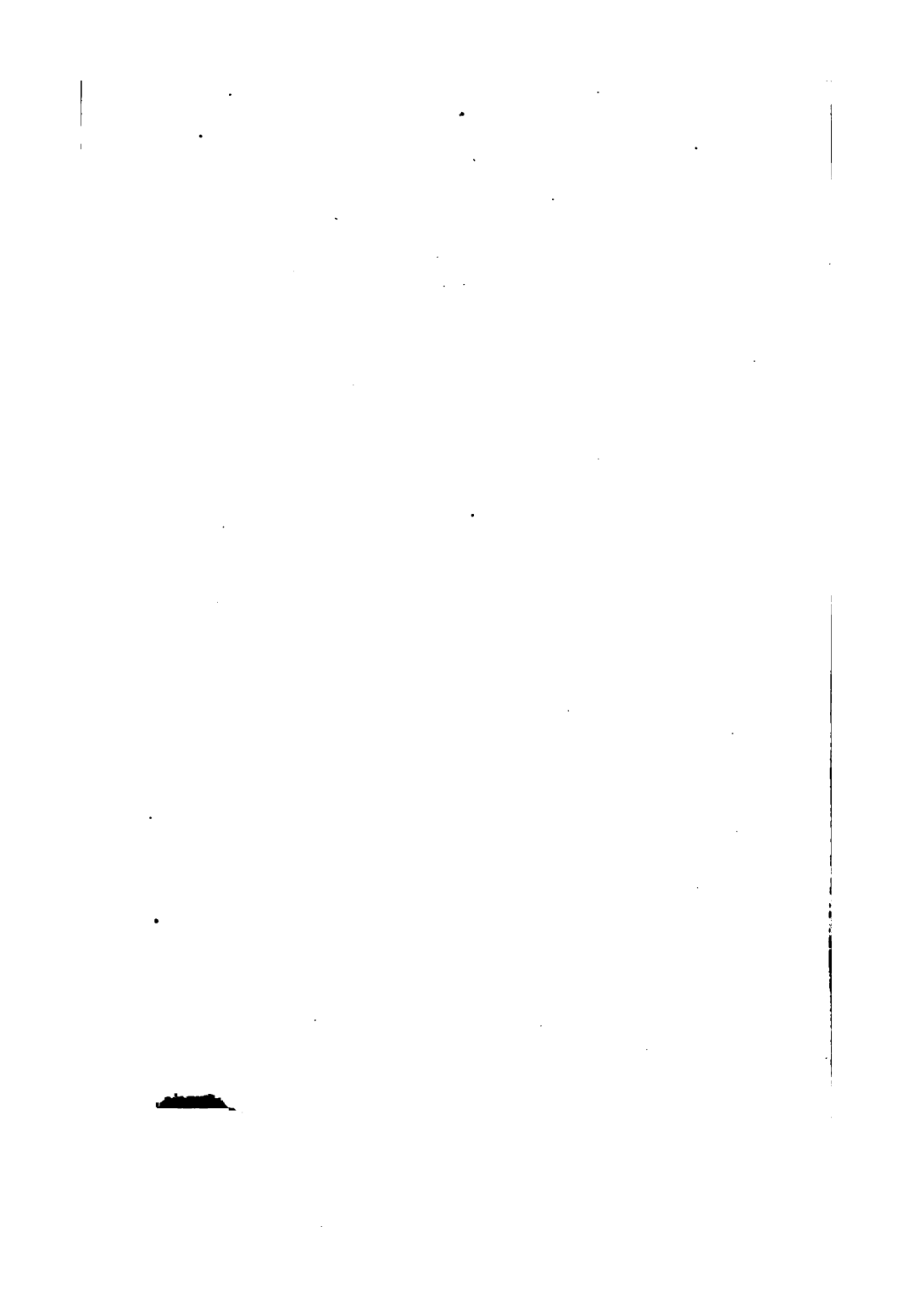
A Basil Plant

by

Ethel Coxon



A BASIL PLANT.



A BASIL PLANT.

A BASIL PLANT.

A PRESENT DAY STORY.

BY

ETHEL COXON,

AUTHOR OF "MONSIEUR LOVE."

"He once called her his basil plant; and when she asked for an explanation, said that basil was a plant which had thriven wonderfully on a murdered man's brains."—MIDDLEMARCH.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON,
NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1881.

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251. i. 524.

PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED, LONDON AND BECCLES

TO MY OLDEST FRIEND,

MRS. FRANCIS HOLLAND.

•

THERE is a picture in the National Gallery which many of us know well—the portrait of a young man with a pale face, a sensitive mouth, and great, sad, dark eyes that look out through the dead years with an unfathomable mournfulness. Something wistful is in their gaze, as though the man pleaded dumbly for pity and sympathy, telling us that the facts of life were hard, and he too weak to fight against them.

A melancholy picture, this portrait of Andrea del Sarto by himself, making our hearts swell with compassion and with a strange tenderness for the aching heart and soul looking at us through those deep

eyes ; but sad as it is, there rests a sadder sequel — another portrait of Andrea, also painted by his own hand in later years, and telling, only too plainly, the end. Life has proved too hard ; the task of being true to his nobler self has been beyond him. The face is but a wreck of the one we love, the lips have grown heavy and sensual, the light of the eyes is quenched, the whole countenance debased : there is no longer a yearning sadness in it, only a wearied satiety.

A BASIL PLANT.



CHAPTER I.

“ If you gave me
Leave to take or to refuse ;
In earnest, do you think I'd choose
This sort of new love to enslave me.”

Pippa Passes.

2

FAST as the tide of bricks and mortar has flowed over Brompton during the last quarter of a century, there still remain relics of the past world not yet buried by the inundation : old-fashioned houses set in the midst of gardens, with trees planted many years ago, and creepers that have

had time to reach the roofs,—such houses as pleasantly remind us of the time, not so long gone by, when between Kensington and Chelsea there were orchards rich with old gnarled apple-trees and deep grass, which stored up in its greenness the sunlight of past years. There were lanes too, then, between the orchards, set on either side with hawthorn hedges; and looking away to the wide sky, one felt the nearness of the river as one cannot now.

It was before the days of this pleasant *rus in urbe* were numbered, that Mr. Charles Goring, R.A., had made his home in one of the houses mentioned above; and now that tall shells of “family mansions” were rising all around, his daughter Evelyn was very glad her home was freehold, and need not fear the barbarism of a speculative landlord with a taste for house-building.

In truth, it would have been a pity that the pretty home in which Charles Goring and his daughter lived should be pulled down, and its quaint garden built over. The house was detached, and had a name of its own to boot, instead of being but a number in a row, like the prim, newly-built residences that stared, with a hundred unwinking windows from the other side of the way, at Fainton Cottage, as it was called, as though trying to inform themselves of its inmates' doings.

They could not have seen much, for Fainton Cottage stood back from the road, and being but one storey high, was almost concealed from view, the front being screened by a row of pollard limes. Inside, it was a queer rambling place, with unexpected steps in the passages, a pleasant wide staircase with shallow stairs, and rooms which had the charm of homeliness,

grace of arrangement, and low-toned harmonious colour. The only modern part of the house was the studio, which had been built out at the side twenty years before, and which by this time was veiled outside, as was the rest of the cottage, with ivy and wisteria.

Miss Goring had a right to be fond and proud of her home, the only one she had ever known, and of which she had been mistress since her mother died, when she was thirteen.

She was eighteen now : a tall girl, very slender, not beautiful, but with thick brown hair, a perfect mouth, the corners of the lips square-cut, and with great clear-grey eyes, serious and sweet. The girl's one trouble, the loss of her mother, had saddened them a little, but their gaze was pure and serene.

These grey eyes were the chief thought

in the mind of a young man who was making his way westward, one evening towards the end of May, to Fainton Cottage, and who, on learning on his arrival at the door that Mr. Goring was out and Miss Evelyn was in the garden, said he would go out there and find her.

The maid evidently considered him too constant a visitor to need announcement, for she left him to find his own way through the low window of the drawing-room, across the lawn, to where Evelyn was seated reading in the fading light, under a wide sycamore. She sprang up when she saw the young man advancing towards her.

"Roland! I am so glad! I wish papa were in, but he is dining out."

"So Jane told me," said Roland Trench, seating himself on the grass near Miss Goring. "How your trees have come out since I've been away!"

"You might have told that from their brothers in the country. How are they all at Colethorpe?"

"Oh, very well. Dora sent her love to you."

"When did you come back to London?"

"Three days ago. I should have been here before, but I've been very busy."

"At the Derby. Oh, Roland, you never will learn to fib naturally!"

"I thought I had improved of late; if I haven't, it isn't for want of practice. All through my week at Colethorpe, I was engaged in telling white lies, for fear of offending home and Warwickshire proprieties."

He threw himself at length on the lawn, looking with vague pleasure at a crimson hawthorn which rose in the dim light against the pale sky, as he remarked, "You don't know how jolly this is, after

a grilling day in town. This garden never tires one."

"It is a dear old place," said Evelyn, looking towards the house and at the soft grass, across which one or two fruit-trees stretched their blossomed arms. "I should be very sorry to leave it."

"Would you?" said Roland, in an odd tone, which made Evelyn look at him with some surprise.

"Why, you know that I should as well as I do myself!" she answered brightly. "Or you ought to do so, considering how long you have known us."

"I beg your pardon, Evelyn; I'm awfully stupid, but——"

"Have you had your dinner, by the way?" said Evelyn. "There's some cold fowl, if there's nothing else, and a Stilton."

"Thank you, but I don't want anything. I dined at the Arts."

"Then you want your pipe."

"You shouldn't encourage my vices, Eve."

"They don't need much encouragement, I'm afraid," Evelyn answered, as he produced a pouch and a veteran briar-wood from his pocket. "If you like I'll give you a sermon of warning instead."

"Fire away," said Roland, striking a light against the trunk of a tree, and looking with a critical and approving eye at his companion.

She was fair to see in the evening light, her dress of neutral-tinted Indian silk harmonizing with the darker brown of her hair, and forming a soft setting to her face, with its delicate colouring and slender neck. As Roland Trench looked at her, he realized how absolutely she contented him in every way.

He was not a person very easy to con-

tent. The artist's nervous irritability showed in the large pupils of his hazel eyes, and the fine lines of the sensitive mouth. A very handsome face it was, the features nobly moulded, with a wonderful beauty in the long sweep of the brows above the languid eyelids and the dark hazel eyes, that kindled or softened or were lazy as they reflected the young man's fancy or thought. The whole face spoke of the artist's sudden moods of laziness and brightness, of the keen susceptibility to joy and pain, laughter and tears. The hand, too, was the artist's hand—long, nervous, supple, and beautiful. But Mr. Trench was evidently quite content to leave the announcement of his profession to Nature, without helping her to blazon it abroad by any eccentricities of costume or manner.

“By the way,” he said, as after filling

and lighting his pipe he stretched himself luxuriously on the grass, "I had forgotten what I came to tell you. Will the sermon wait?"

"Of course. Oh, Roland, you haven't—"

"Yes, I have."

"Sold your picture? Oh, how glorious!"

"The appreciative individual turned up to-day—an old fellow from Manchester. Would you like to see his autograph? I have it here."

This was said with a flush, and in a tone—that was half assumed, half real—of pride and pleasure, as Roland Trench drew forth a cheque from his waistcoat pocket and showed it to Evelyn, like a boy as he was.

"I am so glad!" said Evelyn, warmly. "And I was fond of your picture. If I had been rich, I should have bought it myself."

"Would you?"—eagerly. "If I had known that, I——"

"You could hardly have afforded to make me a present of it," said Evelyn, laughing.

"I would have," he returned, in all earnestness.

Evelyn laughed a little nervously, she could not have told why. "I shouldn't have accepted it," she answered. "But, Roland, this is magnificent! You will be able to travel like a prince now, and stop where you will."

"It won't do everything," said Roland; "but it does make things easier, and I can loiter a little on my way. I don't mean to stay long at the big places, but I have a great fancy for the old Belgian towns, with the bits of exquisite carving and architecture one comes on unexpectedly—things done by men who never

made a name, who perhaps were never heard of, but whose work makes us envious. I like those quaint gargoyles and friezes one meets abroad, all notes in the great symphony of art. I suppose one finds all this much better, too, in the old Italian towns. I shall see."

"Do you know to hear of all this is rather grievous to stay-at-homes, like me," said Evelyn, in a would-be injured tone. "But it will be very pleasant. I wish I were you."

"If only——" The young man stopped, then said, "If I can send home and sell a picture next year, as well, I shall live in clover during my two years at Rome; which, by the way, I don't believe will do me the least good."

"Then why do you go?"

Roland shrugged his shoulders. "I'm tired of life here, and fancy I may like it

better there ; but it wouldn't take much even now to make me change my mind, and stay in England."

" I hope you won't."

" Why ? Are you in such a hurry to get rid of me ? " Mr. Trench's tone was slightly piqued.

" Nonsense ! " was all she condescended to answer.

" I wish I were sure of its being nonsense," he said. " You've been wonderfully good to me, always listening to all my rubbish, and letting me bore you as long as I like, but I believe it will be a relief to you when I am gone."

There was a real sadness in the voice, and it touched Evelyn.

" You know very well it will not," she said ; " but you hardly deserve I should answer you gravely."

He made no answer for a few minutes,

but puffed at his pipe and plucked the blades of grass. At last he said abruptly—

“You will miss me, Eve, really?”

“Most really,” she said, earnestly and warmly. Her tone stirred something deeper, tenderer, more passionate in the young man’s heart. With a sudden movement he drew nearer to her, looking up in her face as he spoke.

“Eve,” he said, “my Eve, won’t you tell me to stay? I could do more, much more in England, with you by me, than I ever shall in Rome, wanting you. I want you so much nearer to me, as it is. Will you come?”

“Roland!”

Her tone was one of absolute surprise; then, as his meaning grew on her, a flood of crimson colour started to her face and the tears rushed up to her eyes.

“Oh, Roland, you don’t mean it!”

"I have never meant anything before. Evelyn, can't you answer me?" There was almost a despairing cry in his voice.

"I couldn't; I am so sorry, but I couldn't."

"You could never care for me?"

"I do care for you, but not in that way. I always have cared for you."

"And you might grow to love me. I know I am not good enough for you, but, Eve, you might try."

"Try to love!" Her lip quivered with a pitiful smile. "You cannot wish that, and I would not wrong you by it. I do not mean to marry; I am quite happy as I am, and papa could not do without me. Don't say any more, dear; it is only pain to us both."

"And you never guessed I loved you?"

"Never," said Evelyn, a flash of fun gleaming through her distress. "How

could I, when you told me how much in love you were with the second Miss Burdoch."

A moment more, and she repented her words, poor Roland's face was so dark as he said—

"You needn't laugh; it is worse than you can know."

"I don't laugh," she answered earnestly. "You don't know how wretched I feel, or how guilty, but it would be worse to deceive you even than to hurt you. Oh, Roland, do forgive me!" she ended imploringly.

They had both risen, and stood fronting one another. For all answer he bent and kissed her forehead with his hot lips, and then he had gone; and Evelyn gave a long sob, half of relief, half of pain.

They were both very young, and had known each other all their lives. No

wonder the girl felt dazed and stunned as though it were a thing out of nature that she should love Roland Trench. And yet, what did it mean—this strange dull pain at her heart, this longing to call him back, which was strangely like an aching regret?

CHAPTER II.

"This thorn
Doth to our rose of youth rightly belong."
All's Well that Ends Well.

WHEN Roland had gone, Evelyn still sat in the garden in the darkening twilight, wondering if what had passed between them were real.

It had never occurred to her that Roland Trench could love her, except as he always had done. Mrs. Trench and Mrs. Goring had been cousins, distant ones, but very fond of each other, and when Roland's family had lived in London, Evelyn had been constantly with him and his sister

Dora. Three years before this, the Trenches had left London for good, having taken a place in Warwickshire ; but Roland had stayed in London as a student at the Academy, and had been in the habit of dropping in at Fainton Cottage whenever he chose, which was frequently.

This year young Trench had had his first picture hung at Burlington House, and his father, pleased at the lad's success, had offered to send him to Rome for two years' study. Evelyn had sympathized with Roland's pleasure at the idea, though she had felt she should miss him much.

She had never felt how much she should feel his loss, never realized to herself how dull life would be without his presence, as she did this evening, when at the same time her wish was never to see him again.

She was a motherless girl, and had lived much by herself to herself. Till now, she

had never cared to question the nature of her fondness for Roland. It had seemed a natural thing that she should care for him, that he should make her the confidante of his hopes and dreams, as he might have made his sister Dora, had she still been in London, and had cared for the things he cared for.

And now——

Oh! she wished she had not spoken so; things could never be again as they were before. Till now she had never felt that she had quite left her childhood behind her, but to-night she had learnt suddenly that she was now a woman, holding the happiness not only of her own, but of another's life in her hand.

It was quite dark before she left the garden and went into the quiet drawing-room, where the only light was a shaded reading lamp. She felt restless, nervous,

wretched; she tried to read, but Roland's words seemed now and again to be spoken in her ear; she tried to work, but that was worse, for she could not drive away the doubtful miserable feeling which lay like a weight on her heart; so she went to the piano and played fitfully to herself in the dim light, and slowly the music quieted her.

She was playing a nocturne of Chopin's, when the door opened and her father entered.

"You are back early, papa," she said, as he came and stood behind her.

"Yes; don't leave off my child. What is that? I like it."

Evelyn finished Chopin's dreamy thought, then came and sat by Mr. Goring by the window, from where they could see the young May moon rising behind the trees.

"The new moon," said Mr. Goring. "What are your three wishes, Eve?"

"I mustn't tell them, else they won't come to pass."

"You told me one last month, and I suppose that has destroyed its virtue."

He could not see the girl's cheek flush in the faint light, and her voice was quiet enough as she answered—

"You mean that Roland's picture might sell; well, that is fulfilled."

"Is it? How do you know?"

"He came round to-night to tell us."

"I wish I had seen him. I'm very glad of his luck."

"And you liked the picture, didn't you, papa?"

"Yes; it was crude, faulty, but there was a great deal in it. It showed that the boy is aiming at the highest he knows of, though he can't reach it—yet."

"Do you think he ever will?"

"How do you mean? No man ever reaches his ideal, unless it be a very low one indeed. I think it is in Roland to do a great deal, which shall satisfy us, perhaps entirely, but never content himself."

"You do think he will be a great artist?" There was a depth of earnestness and hope in her question.

"I don't know about that. It lies in him to be a fine one, if he so chooses."

"And he will. Oh, papa, he does work hard."

"Yes; and he works well, which is more to the point. You don't know, Eve, how many men I have seen, whom the world calls hard workers, and who were meant by nature for true artists, so that their work cannot help possessing a certain sweetness and grace as it is, but who

have never fulfilled the promise of their youth."

"Now you are off on your favourite hobby, papa. But people may work for art's sake, and yet for bread and cheese. They must live and have homes."

"Yes; but bread and cheese is not champagne and Périgord pie, and the homes need not soak up the money they do."

"But the very fact that a man is an artist means that he must love beautiful things."

"And that he feels beauty more keenly than other men. But that should make him more simple in his ways of life than a man who can only appreciate things by their cost; because the artist judges anything by its real beauty and worth."

"Yes; but some beautiful things are horribly expensive," said Evelyn, with

quaint ruefulness. "Your theory is very nice, but practice doesn't prove it easy even to you. But you haven't said yet why you are doubtful about Roland."

"I never said I was."

"No; but your voice did."

Mr. Goring was silent for a few moments, then he said—

"The lad is very easily influenced; I don't fancy he has sufficient strength of will to work out his salvation himself. It all depends, or much of it does, on the people around him. If he marries, it will almost rest with his wife."

"Do you think so?"

Very low and very calm was her voice, but a sharp pain shot through her heart.

"Of course, it is only my own idea. He mayn't justify it."

They sat together a little longer, then Evelyn rose to go to bed. As a rule,

she ran quickly upstairs, at the imminent risk of the wax from her candle marking her track on the stair carpet ; but to-night she went up rather slowly, and when she reached her own room, she did not begin to undress, but sat thinking over her father's words.

" If it should be true ; if really she had had in her hand, not only Roland's happiness, but his art life." The thought almost made her tremble.

" Oh ! I'm glad I said no," she thought to herself. " I should not have been strong enough, or good enough, to help him rightly. It is best as it is."

She did not love him. But as she stood by her window, the moonlight falling on her earnest face, so young in its fairness, her thoughts went out to him, thoughts so tender and so holy as to be almost prayers.

She hoped for all good to surround him, as it surely must; he was so bright and good and charming; so passionately eager in his art, yet so humble about his own powers. His life must be a success; everything looked brightly for him to help him to press forward towards his high ideal. Everything was for him, except she herself, and she had been against him.

"But not against his art," she thought, rather sadly. "It would have been the worst thing for him to have married so young; besides, I couldn't have done it. I hope he will get over it soon, or that he won't be very unhappy; or, I hope——"

But what Evelyn hoped besides, she did not herself know; and the thought stayed unfinished in her mind.

CHAPTER III.

“Upon her eyelids many graces sat
Under the shadow of her even brows.”

Faerie Queene.

IT was a March evening, wild and wet, and the warm glow of the drawing-room at Fainton Cottage looked very comfortable, as the combined light of fire and lamp shone mellowly on the dim, rich colouring of the room ; on the five o'clock tea things, which had done their work for this afternoon ; on Mr. Goring, who was seated at ease in his arm-chair ; on Evelyn, who was near him, and on another girl sitting on the low marble fender, her face turned to the fire.

Evelyn had some work in her hand, but it did not seem to advance very quickly.

"I don't know," said Mr. Goring; "things are changing very rapidly, you say, Miss Anley. You are bored by politics, but if ——"

Evelyn started, her work fell from her hand. There was a figure at the doorway, unseen for nearly three years, "she couldna think 'twas he," and for a moment stared in a bewildered way, while her father sprang from his chair.

"Roland!"

It was a very decided reality, and Evelyn knew it to be so, as she heard Roland's laugh and felt his hand grasp.

"My dear boy, when did you come? I thought you weren't due for another fortnight," said Mr. Goring.

"No, but I changed my mind and

started earlier. I suppose I shall take them rather by surprise at Colethorpe."

"I'm very glad to see you again, old fellow, at all events. When did you arrive?"

"Only this morning. I go down home to-morrow. I was awfully afraid I mightn't find you at home, but I couldn't resist looking you up the first thing."

"Well done! Did you have a rough crossing?"

"Pretty well," Roland answered, looking at Evelyn and the young lady who had been seated by the fire, but who had now risen and laid her hand on Evelyn's arm, saying in a low tone—

"I must go now; I promised mother I would be back to dinner. Good-bye, Mr. Goring."

She held out a long white hand to him as she spoke, then with a slight, pretty

bend of the head she left the room, followed by Evelyn, before Roland had received much more than the impression of a tall and very graceful figure, in dark brown velvet, and a well-poised head crowned with bright hair.

"Must you go?" said Evelyn to this young lady in the hall.

"I really must; I oughtn't to have stayed so long, but I couldn't make up my mind to go, as I shan't see you again for some time. We leave town on Tuesday, and shall not come back before May. It is very horrible, for you don't know how dull it is down in Kent."

"I wish I could change places with you just now, when the spring woods are beginning to bud."

"Yes," said Gertrude Anley. "Of course I like them; but supposing it rains the whole time, as is sure to be the case."

"Don't indulge in such gloomy forebodings," said Evelyn. "Good-bye."

"Good-bye, dear. So that is your friend Mr. Trench : has he changed much ?"

"I don't know," said Evelyn, dreamily.

Miss Anley laughed, a clear bell-like laugh it was, sounding prettily on the night air, as she stepped out of the house and hailed a passing hansom. Roland and Mr. Goring heard the laugh through the half-open drawing-room door.

"Evelyn is some time saying good-bye to her friend," observed Mr. Goring. "A very handsome girl, isn't she? I don't mean Eve, but Miss Anley."

"I hardly saw her," said Roland. "Here is Evelyn," as Miss Goring re-entered the room. "I have hardly seen you yet," he said, taking hold of both her hands and looking at her.

She laughed a little nervously. The

memory closest to her mind was that of their evening in the garden together, nearly the last time she and Roland had looked in each other's faces, three years ago ; but no shade of embarrassment marred the ease of his manner towards her, as he at last let go her hands and pushed her chair forward to the fire, then took one opposite.

"It seems awfully natural to be sitting here, in the old way," he said. "Time seems to have been still with you, except in ——"

"The additional number of my grey hairs," said Mr. Goring.

"I can't see them by this light," said Roland.

He was looking across at Evelyn as he spoke, feeling an exquisite rest and peace in the sight. She had grown during his absence, he was sure of it ; her figure was

more rounded, though slender and supple in its gracefulness; her face was as sweet as ever, but brighter and softer, having lost a certain severity which had fixed the features in her earlier youth. The harmony of her movements was a delight to the eye; her voice all that a woman's voice should be.

“You don't think we have altered much,” said Mr. Goring. “Have you, I wonder? No, not more than might have been expected.”

Yet there was a good deal of difference between the Roland Trench who three years before had pleaded in the fading light in the garden for Evelyn's love, and the Roland Trench who had returned this evening, and seemed to slip so easily back into his old habits—the difference between boy and man. The face was sensitive, quick, changeful as of old; but it was more

manly, more warmly tinted by three years of a southern sun; and the thick gold-brown moustache, which now shaded the upper lip, had been but a line of down when he had left England. Even now, at four and twenty, there were one or two lines about the face that spoke of passionate endeavour and longing to realize his thoughts in his work; and there was a restless look in the eyes and mouth which had not used to be there.

So they sat talking in the firelight, till —while Mr. Goring and Roland were discussing the *Rospigliosi Aurora* — Evelyn stole away, like *Desdemona*, to despatch her household cares, and tell the parlour-maid Mr. Trench would stay to dinner. Then, like *Desdemona* also, she hastened back, envious of what might have been said during her absence.

“Have you any picture for this year’s

Academy, Roland ?” Mr. Goring was asking, as Evelyn came back to the room.

“ Yes, one. You will come and see it, won’t you—you and Eve ? Come to lunch or tea.”

“ Have you found a studio yet, then ?”

“ No, not yet. I’m looking about, or I’m going to do so. At the present I’m with Breynton. He offered me a share in his studio till I find one to suit me, and as he and I were always great chums, I fancy it will be very jolly.”

“ What is your picture, Roland ?” asked Evelyn.

“ Lamia, just before she returns to her serpent state.”

“ You are not going in for the present worship of the ghastly, I hope, my dear boy,” said Mr. Goring. “ It doesn’t sound a pleasant subject.”

“ No, sir ; but the story symbolizes what

so many of us have felt the truth of, that I think it must be a legitimate subject for art, and I have tried not to lose sight of beauty."

"What do you mean it symbolizes?" said Evelyn, from the depths of the large arm-chair in which she was leaning back.

"Don't strive to torture poor Keats's fair imaginings into allegories that won't hold water," said her father. "Lamia means different things to all of us. We shall tell better what she means to Roland when we see his picture, than we could from any words of his."

"I hope you will," said Roland, with a laugh. "My fear is that I can't express it either with brush or tongue."

"There is the gong," said Mr. Goring, rising. "Eve, this is a festive occasion; you should have got out a bottle of the

Johannisberg to do honour to the future R.A."

"I have done so, papa," answered Evelyn.

She had done that, and more. The natural woman's instinct had moved her to see that the dinner-table, always pretty, was brighter than usual with blossoms ruthlessly torn from her tiny greenhouse, and tall, sweet, white hyacinths; so that there was an unconscious welcome in the room, which Roland felt, though he could not tell its cause.

There was more the feeling of home-coming in this evening at Fainton Cottage—in the cheerful dining-room, with its round table, its flowers, its soft light falling on the subdued hues of old oak and tapestry; in the daintily-cooked little dinner and the rare wine; and in Mr. Goring's cordial cheerfulness, and the gladness shining

in Evelyn's deep eyes—than there would be to-morrow, on his arrival at his father's house, thought Mr. Trench.

“Who was that young lady my arrival frightened away?” asked Roland, when dinner had proceeded some little way.

“Miss Anley,” said Evelyn. “Her father is the member for Haywell.”

“Is she a great friend of yours?”

“I like her very much. She is very charming and very pretty — more than pretty. Didn't you think so?”

“Your father asked me nearly the same question, but I really hardly saw her. All I noticed was that she moved well and had wonderful hair. What is she like beyond that?”

“You had better ask papa. He is in love with her.”

“A true bill,” said Mr. Goring, placidly eating his fish. “She is the handsomest

woman I have seen for a very long time."

"But I don't quite understand," said Roland to Miss Goring. "Do you like her yourself?"

"Of course I do very much," answered Evelyn, simply. "She is very nice, I have told you so already; but you know I never can describe people well, and really she is difficult to describe."

"I don't think so," said Mr. Goring. "She is very charming, very beautiful, and perhaps a little self-engrossed."

"Oh, papa!" said Evelyn, indignantly.

"You know more of her than I do, my dear child."

"I suppose we are all self-engrossed more or less," said Evelyn. "It isn't fair to blame Miss Anley for a fault she shares with her kind."

Roland looked up at the girl. "Do you agree with Blake—

“ ‘Nought loves another as itself,
Or venerates another so ’ ? ”

“ No,” said Evelyn, quickly ; “ you don’t,
do you ? ”

“ I haven’t an opinion to bless myself
with,” answered the young man lightly.
“ I want to know yours.”

She looked thoughtful. “ If it be a
truth,” she said at last, “ I think it is only a
half one.”

“ An unpleasantly humiliating half,” put
in her father.

“ A horrible one,” the girl returned,
rather vehemently ; “ and Blake couldn’t
always have believed it, or he wouldn’t
have written the other lines—

“ ‘ Love seeketh not itself to please.’ ”

“ H’m ! ” said Mr. Goring ; “ still it’s a
rather pessimist view for a poet to hold.”

The evening passed very pleasantly.

Evelyn did not talk much, it was not her wont, but her eyes lost no word of the conversation her father and Roland carried on with the aid of their cigars.

"Sing us something, child," said Mr. Goring, when they returned to the drawing-room.

Evelyn obeyed. Her voice was of very usual power, but its sweetness was its own, and it had ripened during the years of Roland's absence. Its sound was very sweet to him, and when she had sung Schubert's "Wanderer," he went up to the piano.

"Thank you, Eve," he said, in a low voice, "that is a good home welcoming."

She looked up, and their eyes met.

"You must have been so sorry to leave Rome."

"I know I am awfully glad to be back in England."

"Are you?"

He laughed. "It's the truth," he said; "but to tell you the whole truth, the week before I left Rome, I was cursing my luck in having to leave it, and spent six hours of the day in grumbling."

"And the other six!"

"You are growing inquisitive, Eve! How would you like it if I asked how you have spent the time I have been away?"

"I don't know. I have gone on living."

"And I have gone on living, too. It's a habit one gets into," he answered, laughing. "But we can't enter into comparisons of our methods of living to-night. It's too late. Good-night."

Five minutes later, Roland, returning to his hotel, found himself still humming the "Wanderer" to the accompaniment of the cab wheels all the way there.

CHAPTER IV.

“Daffodils,
Which come before the swallow dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty.”

Winter's Tale.

WELL, Roland, is that the extent of your preparations ; tea and daffy-down-dillies ?

He who propounded this question was a man of about five-and-thirty, Max Breyn-ton by name, with a thin, finely-cut face, the delicacy of which was much veiled by a large beard.

He was engaged before his picture, working at it in an apparently lazy manner, with pipe in mouth, and now and then glancing round at his companion, Roland

Trench, who was arranging a great mass of yellow Lent lilies in a queer pottery vase.

"What do you want?" said Roland. "Hang these beggars! They won't stay where one sticks them," as an attempt to place the daffodils to his liking ended in failure, and he thrust them pell-mell into the vase.

"It doesn't seem to me your ideas are very extensive," answered Max, delicately manipulating ultramarine and white together on his palette, and disposing it in a series of dabs, growing small by degrees, preparatory to dashing at a line of sapphire blue sea.

"One would think you had never had a girl or a woman in the studio before."

"Never," said Max, impressively. "I never had. What is more, I never mean to have."

"How about models? Oh, I forgot, you don't need them. That girl I had here this morning had a very poor opinion of our studio."

"No, I don't need them, thank Heaven." Max's tone was devout, and Roland did not see his face.

"You may thank Heaven," said Roland. "There was that girl this morning jabbering, I don't know what, about Smith, and Brown, and Jones, and what they were doing. What the devil do I want to know about Smith, and Brown, and Jones? If I want to learn about their work, I can go to their studios. As it was, I wanted to attend to my own, and wished her to sit and hold her tongue."

"They are all alike," said Max, "she and the rest of her sex. Of course, old boy, I'm glad that Goring and his daughter are coming here to gaze at your immortal

work, but I never had a lady here to gush over mine."

"Eve Goring won't gush."

"Won't she?" said Max. "Well, I don't know that I don't prefer gush to a stony glare, and 'Ah! very nice.' I'm not sure, though; I'm not learned in feminine criticism."

"You must have the usual ruck of people here on picture Saturday?"

"Not if I knows it; not a soul, but a few fellows who really care. But all the same, I know the fuss that Dayrell and the rest of that lot make when ladies are coming to drink a dish of tea with them, with forced fruit and hothouse lilies, and I can't help thinking you are treating the young woman unhandsomely."

"Hang it, Max, don't class me with Dayrell and his set, confound them!"

"Amen," responded Max, to the last ejaculation.

"Why the deuce should you? we haven't a thing in common."

"'Qui s'excuse,' etc. I never did class you with them, even in thought. If you were of their kind, we shouldn't be chums."

"Awful asses they do make of themselves; and it's a pity, for there are some not half bad fellows among them," said Roland, meditatively tickling his nose with a daffodil.

A gleam of queer humour shot through Max's grey-green eyes as he glanced at the man leaning against the window, and looking picturesque enough, with his handsome, rich tinted face, his brown velvet coat, and with the yellow flower in his hand.

"You've got it in you," he said. "A sympathy with their idiotcy, that only needs feminine flattery to develop it, and that won't be wanting. Oh, Roley! Roley! why the devil are you so good looking?"

"Draw it mild," said Roland, with a laugh; "the devil may know—I don't."

"The devil does know, my son; better, far better to be ill-featured even as I am, rude in manner as I am, a social snail as I am, than to be debonnaire, sweet-voiced, stuffed full of admirable parts, as thou art, and have the sirens mark thee for their prey."

"They'll find me rather tough," was all Roland vouchsafed in answer to this exhortation. "Hallo! what a sunset," as he turned to the window. "Look at that bar of gold above those sullen crimson clouds. I must have a try at it, and those dark masses of trees. It's just what I want."

He pulled his tools together and set to work in a quick broad way, with wide sweeps of colour, which caught at least a vivid memory of the burning hues of the western sky. The sketch hardly took

ten minutes, and just as he was finishing, there came a ring at the bell.

"There they are," he said, springing up and disappearing into the passage, to admit and welcome his friends.

Breynton muttered something, and applied himself vigorously to his picture, with a sudden fit of shyness, and a wish it had been rather a wild beast that was about to invade his lair than a young lady.

He heard Roland's warm greeting outside, and Mr. Goring answering; then he heard another voice, fresh and young, which struck pleasantly on his ear.

"That's a nice voice," he thought, and, turning round, found himself face to face with Evelyn Goring.

He liked her; he liked the fresh, frank face, the sweet eyes, the tender yet firm mouth, and as Roland introduced them, he responded to her greeting cordially enough.

“Take off your hat and cloak, won’t you, Evelyn?” said Roland, assisting her to do so as he spoke.

“Oh! there is the Lamia,” she said, as her eyes fell on the corner of the room where Roland’s picture was. She went up to it, followed by Roland and her father, while Max stood watching her.

He noticed she did not speak at once, but stood looking at the painting, till her own face seemed to move in sympathy with the pictured one of Lamia, her eyes to dilate, her lips to part, nay, her very face to pale into likeness with the one she looked at; as Christabel’s might have done in gazing at Geraldine’s.

“It is much the strongest thing you have done, Roland,” said Mr. Goring.

“I’ve tried to make it so; I don’t know how I’ve succeeded. I’m glad you think it’s an advance.”

"A big one," answered the elder artist, falling back a little to study the picture.

"I've lost all power of judging of it myself," said Roland. "I can't judge how it looks to other people. Everything one does is so weak compared with the idea. It is only a long striving after what can't be realized;" he spoke rather sadly, almost wearily.

"But you feel that?" said Evelyn, turning to him, a quick colour kindling her cheeks, a sudden beautiful light in her eyes.

"Every painter must," said Roland. "I mean fellows of my calibre, not giants. It doesn't do to let the idea get possession of one, or one would never do anything; but one must feel it."

"Precious few do," muttered Max to himself. "That's just what makes him of a different sort to Dayrell and his lot, and the girl sees it."

She had turned to some of Roland's sketches on the table, and Max took advantage of the opportunity, while Roland was listening to Mr. Goring's remarks on the Lamia, to turn his own picture with its face to the easel. The sound of the movement caught Evelyn's ear, and she looked up.

"May I see?" she said, pleadingly, rather quaintly, but with such an evidently sincere wish in her voice that Max yielded, even graciously.

"Of course, if you wish it," he said. "I don't think you will care for it much."

It was only a line of blue and green sea, dimpling with "laughter innumerable," and a summer sky above. Evelyn's eye drank it in with a keen delight.

"Oh, it is so happy," she said, at last.

Max looked at her, at the smile on her lips, the brightness on her face.

"You are," he answered, quietly. "To any one who was unhappy, that bright blue sky and sea would seem most miserable, according to our modern idea."

"You mean that the older one was to make Nature in art suit with man's moods, as with Lear in the storm; and now, instead, we hold Coleridge's belief, 'In our life alone doth Nature live.'"

"No," said Max; "we have rather passed through that. The newest thing is to make Dame Nature a step-mother, who jars on us when we are sad, and insists on being melancholy when we rejoice."

"Yes; and it is the——"

"Were you going to say 'the most natural thing in its irony'?"

"No, I do not think it is, if——"

"If what?"

"Nothing," said Evelyn, rather shame-faced, and trying to put a stop to the talk into which they had drifted, by bending nearer to examine the picture.

But Max would not let her escape. "I wish you would tell me what you meant," he said, a grave earnestness and interest in his eyes and voice.

She raised her look to his, simply. "If God is beyond the sky," she said, "its irony cannot be real."

Max said no more, but turned to Roland and Mr. Goring, who were turning over a portfolio of his sketches.

"Hands off, Roley. Mr. Goring, you shouldn't aid and abet this fellow in exposing his friend's weaknesses. Roland, aren't you going to give Miss Goring some tea? The kettle boils, and—where are the muffins?"

"Oh, let me toast them," said Evelyn.

“Certainly not,” answered Roland.
“We are Bohemians, Evelyn; but we don’t set our guests to do our work.”

“You a Bohemian!” said Max.
“Nothing of the kind, my dear boy. When you entertain Miss Goring in a studio furnished after your own heart, the kettle will be modelled after a Cellini vase, the cups will be *Karl Thedor*—I haven’t the least idea what that is—and black pages will glide over the parquet floors. For further particulars, see Ouida’s novels.”

“You hear this fellow,” said Roland, turning his face, rather deepened in colour from the fire, before which he was toasting a muffin. “Only this afternoon he was blowing me up for not making more ado about your visit, wanting me to go in for pine apples and orchids, Eve, in your honour.”

“I am very glad you did not,” said

Evelyn. "I don't care for pine apple, and I much prefer daffodils to orchids."

"Roland knew you, you see, Miss Goring," said Max, some subtle shade of melancholy in his voice; "and I only knew him—and—and"—"women in general," he would have added, but could not, looking at the serene purity of her face, which rebuked the trite cynicism — "and his taste," he added, lamely enough. "Do you see the few whim-whams that are about here? They are all his. While I was monarch of all I surveyed, there wasn't a bit of old armour, or a single Venetian glass to be seen; the sole *objêt d'art* was my pewter."

"I like a studio plain," said Evelyn. "Looking as if work were done there. I don't like all the beautiful trinketry in them that you find now."

"Don't you, Eve?" said Roland.

"No," she answered; "but I like one jar of flowers like these," as she bent over the sweetness of the yellow blossoms.

"They go awfully well with your dress," said Roland. "Just right; do wear some of them at your throat—and in your hair."

Evelyn obeyed, though a "lively heat" rushed up to her face.

Long after, both these young men kept the memory in their hearts of the girl, as she sat that afternoon in the studio before the small tea-table on which the tea had been placed. She had a dress on of dull bronze colour, very simply made, and falling softly and graciously, and in her brown hair, and against the tender fairness of her throat, shone the golden Lent lilies.

She and her father did not stay long after tea. When she put on her fur-lined cloak and hat, she loosened the daffodils from her hair, but kept them in her hand

as she said good-bye; and as Max and Roland escorted their visitors to the door, Breynton could see how carefully she screened them from the east wind which blew keenly up the road.

"That's a nice girl, Roland," said Max, as the two friends returned to the studio, and Max took up his beloved and neglected pipe.

"She's a darling," answered Roland. "Where is the pewter? That tea has made me thirsty. This tankard of yours is a great institution, Max," as he took a long pull at the large pewter, which was never allowed to be empty, and never very long remained full.

Max received the compliment to his studio Penates with a grunt of acknowledgment. He saw Roland did not wish to talk about Evelyn, and he was quite content himself to be silent, so puffed away

meditatively, while Roland took a seat on the other side of the fire, and reached down his pipe from the mantel-shelf, proceeding to fill it in a leisurely and artistic manner. Though he did not care to discuss Evelyn, even with Max, he was thinking of her, meditating what a sweet influence hers would be in a life, pondering how well the lines of Webster expressed her—

“One whose mind
Appeared more like a ceremonious chapel,
Full of sweet music, than a thronging presence.”

Dear and lovely she was ; but even if he could win her, was he quite sure that his feeling for her was sufficient to fill her life ? He knew enough of Evelyn to know that no less than a supreme love would content her soul, and that it would be an injury, nay, an insult to her, should he, even unknowingly to her, offer her less. He knew that the boyish passion he had

for her three years ago, no longer held possession of him; but she seemed purer, dearer, fairer to him now than she had then, and he could not analyse his feeling for her, nor did he care to do so. He knew one thing for certain, it was of a higher order than that he had ever owned for any other woman.

He was roused from his reverie by the clock striking a quarter to seven.

"By Jove!" he said, springing up; "I must be off to dress, if I'm dining out. You'll be at the club, I suppose, Max, later on?" "Yes."

Max sat on alone, gazing into the fire's red depths, almost unconscious that a girl's face filled his thoughts.

"It mayn't be so bad for the boy, after all," he thought; "she doesn't seem like most of them. If he be bent on marrying, he had better marry her."

At last he rose, and lit the lamp. Its light fell full on the ghastly loveliness of the Lamia, the lithe shrinking form writhing in the rich marriage robes, and the terrible, miserable face. The picture arrested Max's eyes anew.

"What power he has in him!" he thought. "There isn't another man, as young as he, who could do anything one quarter as fine. The colour is magnificent. Oh! there are faults, but only those of crudeness. If he can do this at twenty-four, what may he not have done by the time he is fifty. If I had his youth and his power——!"

" 'If I be not I, as I suppose I be.'"

He can do what he will, and I think he will do what he can. He has everything in his favour; time, genius, no money worries, and that girl to care for him. She does care for him, too; he needn't

have much fear. I don't fancy he has; he is quiet enough; but I can't quite make him out. Well! what is it to me? Nothing; but I want the boy to do what lies in him."

He was interrupted by Roland's dashing in, in faultless evening array, in search of something or another.

"Here's a sight for gods and men!" quoth Max; "Antinous outdone!"

"Don't be a fool, Max," was the only reply.

Max shrugged his shoulders. "What's bred in the bone will come out in the flesh," he remarked oracularly.

CHAPTER V.

"The hour which might have been, yet might not be,
Which man's and woman's heart conceived and bore,
Yet whereof life was barren."

ROSSETTI.

MARCH and April drifted on, and Evelyn sometimes wondered if the years of Roland's absence had been a dream, so easily had he slidden back into his old habits, of dropping in whenever he chose at Fainton Cottage, in spite of the distance between it and Breynton's studio.

Nevertheless he worked eagerly and earnestly. The Gorings never saw him till the afternoon, when the light had gone, and he could enjoy his leisure without the

feeling that he was wronging his work. Just now, he was at one of those times when a sudden advancement seemed to seize him, when it appeared as though—

“Das Unzulängliche
Hier wird's Ereignisz
Das Unbeschriebliche
Hier ist es gethan.”

Things he had been trying to grasp for years seemed at last to be within his power. He felt his work was good, pursued it passionately and intensely, and then was rather apt to end in a reaction of disgust and disappointment with himself and his works, and the knowledge of how many years of labour lay between him and the achievement of his desires.

In every mood, however, he realized that Evelyn was a fair influence in his life, and the feeling grew stronger and stronger of his need of her, if she would have him.

Yet he paused, unwilling to believe this was the very crown of emotion life could hold for him. In his inmost heart he knew it was not; knew it even by the remembrance of his younger feeling for Evelyn herself; knew that love held a keener rapture, a more exquisite pain than was his.

Still he came yet more often to Fainton Cottage, and found more and more of his pleasure there.

"Like the old days," Evelyn said to herself, knowing secretly it was not like the old days, but with "an air of glory" they had not owned. She had never in the old days felt her heart beat quickly and faintly at the sound of Roland's step; had never known before the silent, intense pleasure it was simply to watch his face, to be in the same room with him; had never waited, as she did now, with a yearn-

ing watchfulness for his visits, staying at home on the chance of his coming. All this was new, and yet so old, so old.

Her life was altered ; she had always been happy ; but now she " began to move about the house with joy," a subtle pleasure lying sweetly at her heart ; the promise of some vague and lovely hope seeming to fill the hours with gladness.

" Max," said Roland one day, at about four in the afternoon, when he had cleaned his own palette and glanced at his friend, who was engaged in etching, " do leave that confounded scritch-scratching alone this afternoon, and come with me to the Gorings."

" Why the deuce should I ?" said Max, rather irritably ; " they don't want me."

" They do," said Roland, leaning over the table at which his friend sat. " It's bad taste, I'll allow ; but you see, you shouldn't

have made yourself so agreeable when they came here, if you didn't want them to see more of you. As it is, they don't believe me when I tell them that you are the modern Timon. Do come, like a good fellow.

Max looked up with a laugh.

"Why the devil are you so anxious for me to go?"

"I think you and Goring will suit, and I fancied you rather took to Evelyn. I want you and her to know more of each other."

"I shouldn't think Miss Goring had any wish to increase our acquaintance."

"What a fellow you are, Max! I tell you she has, or her father has; it's all the same."

"Oh, is it?" said Max. "Never mind, I'll come, but why on earth——"

"You can finish your grumble between here and there. Come along."

"In this rig," said Max, looking at his rather disreputable shooting jacket. "No, thank you. Timon has some faint glimmerings of light, even in his cave. I won't be five minutes."

He kept his word, and soon reappeared in orthodox costume: then he and Roland set out westward.

It was still bright when they reached Fainton Cottage, one of those rare April afternoons which are as a foretaste of summer; the sky pale, clear blue, flecked by golden sunset clouds. They were shown into the drawing-room, No one was there, but the window was open, and through it they saw Eve hastening across the lawn towards it, her hands full of primroses.

Max felt the real "well come" in her greeting, simple and glad in its friendliness.

"Won't you come into the garden?" she

said to them after a moment or two. It is so delicious this afternoon. I am trying to remember it is not June come before its time."

"Why remember it?" said Roland.

"Because I don't care to cheat myself."

"It is a great mistake. Enjoy it as much as you can. Don't try to remember that there may be rain and frost to-morrow. Sufficient unto the day is the good thereof."

"Yes," said Eve, quaintly. "But suppose under the belief that it is June, you bed out your plants, and the frost nips them up."

"I'm not gardener enough to answer you," returned Roland.

"I like April as well as June in its own way," said Evelyn. "Look at my almond tree. Is it not lovely against the sky, with that tender trail of light?"

"But what a garden you have," said Max, "and what a charming old-fashioned house."

"I am very fond of it," the girl answered quickly. "It does not seem like London, does it?"

"I had forgotten London," was all Max replied, as he turned to greet Mr. Goring, who issued from the house and joined them.

He and Max soon got into conversation, and Evelyn and Roland moved away to look at some tree they and Roland's sister had planted in their childhood, and the growth of which Miss Goring wished her companion to admire.

It was a delicate silver birch, and they both took a personal interest in the shining stem, the quivering graceful branches, and the freshly opened tender green leaves, of which Roland broke off a little spray, and put it in his button-hole.

"What a perfect spring we are having this year," he said, leaning his head back, to drink in the quiet of the great sky, now growing deeper with the first shade of twilight.

Evelyn did not answer at once, the words held too deep a meaning for her. She had never felt her youth and her womanhood—the budding germs of new feelings till now latent within her, the sense of the beautiful possibilities of life's summer—as she had done during these last few weeks. In truth, to her it had been an ideal spring.

"It makes one feel how unable one is to feel," she said. "That is what I envy you artists and poets. I don't wish for your power of expressing what you see, but I do envy you the seeing it, the feeling more keenly than the rest of us the beauty of the sky and earth and sea."

As he looked at her face it touched him with a keen sense of rest, tenderness, responsive sympathy.

"I don't believe we do; the sense of beauty is as much, nay more, a part of your life than it is of mine, I know. The only difference lies in the expression of the feeling, not in the feeling itself."

"No," said Eve; "there must be some difference in that, too, for Turner teaches us more of the beauty of a sunset than we should have known of ourselves. Do you remember that old relation of Wordsworth's, who said when she was young there were no mountains and no lakes? and as for the poets,—Think how they have opened our eyes!"

A quick impulse moved him out of himself.

"Then you are a poet, Eve, for I learn of you,"

"Of me," she said, startled and turning with wide eyes at something in his voice.

"Yes. Oh, Eve! why did you banish me from school? I could have learnt so well from you."

The colour rushed to her face, her heart beat fast, and it was a positive relief to her that just at that moment her father called out.

"Eve, child, I want you to show your greenhouse to Mr. Breynton."

"There isn't much to show," she said, as she went towards them. "Three geraniums and two hyacinths, I think."

Roland was vexed; but yet in the reaction that followed there might have been some relief blended with his feeling; a return of the old distrust, that though Evelyn was the sweetest woman he knew, she was not to him the only woman in the world; the old fear of wronging both him-

self and her. Unknown to himself there was a consciousness, very far apart from love within him, a gladness that he was still free.

And Eve, when her visitors had gone, and she was alone in her own room, tried vainly to quiet herself, and the sudden impetuous rush of joy, and hope, and love, that would fill her heart.

"What a fool I am!" she thought to herself. "What a fool! what a fool! But I am so happy. I do think now I may let myself think of him. Oh, what a fool I am!" as she covered her face with her hands, with that swift impulse which comes to every girl when she first fully realizes her love.

CHAPTER VI.

“When in the chronicle of wasted time
I see descriptions of the fairest wights,
And beauty making beautiful, old rhyme
In praise of ladies dead and lovely knights ;
Then in the blazon of sweet beauty’s best
Of hand, of foot, of lip, of eye, of brow ;
I see their antique pen would have expressed
Even such beauty as you master now.”

SHAKESPEARE, *Sonnets*.

“HALF-PAST eleven ; I must be off,” said Roland, relinquishing his cue in the billiard room of the Arts’ Club, three nights later.
“Halloo, Max, here you are at last !”

Max had been on the river all day, dividing his time between sketching and rowing, and only managed to catch a late

train at Taplow. His appearance was somewhat dilapidated, presenting a contrast to Roland, who was attired in our modern version of purple and fine linen.

"I want something to eat," said Breyn-ton. "I'm famished; all I could get at Taplow was a gory chop. Oh, hang it! don't bolt for a minute or two; stay and have a modest drink. You'll need it if you are going to the Fields' crush."

Roland complied, and sat near Max, while the latter appeased the demands of a frantic appetite. "Will Miss Goring be there?" Max inquired, after some little time.

"I don't know," said Roland; "she knows the Fields, but I don't fancy——"

"I suppose no woman, even she, has common sense enough to see that a cram like the Fields' can't be pleasant. It is the fashion, and that is enough."

"I don't know about Evelyn's having common sense," said Roland. "But if she hasn't, she has what does in its place, a certain poetical fibre, which makes a good many of Mrs. Grundy's orderings jar on her. She isn't very fond of going out, at all events, to these big crushes."

Twenty minutes later, Mr. Trench found himself before the awninged door of a big red-bricked house in Kensington, struggling with a crowd up the staircase, at the head of which stood the hostess, the wife of a popular artist, a handsome woman in a dead gold gown, with a gold fillet in her thick black hair.

A shake of the hand, a smile, and Roland passed on into the large drawing-room, now crowded with the greater part of the five hundred people, who, on the announcement of Mrs. Field's being at home on that night, had, apparently, frantically determined that they would be abroad.

Roland thought it a bore, and wondered why he had come. He did not know very many people, and it was too crowded for him to do more than just shake hands with those he did know. He moved to another room, opening on the conservatory, which was a little less crowded, and gazed through the wide doors at the moving throng before him, when his eyes fell on a young lady at the end of the room.

She was sitting on a low couch, covered with Eastern embroideries, of a dull subdued tone of yellow. Behind her rose the dark sheaves of palms, making a fit background for her head, set so sweetly on its curved white throat, and crowned with waves of beautiful bright hair. Her eyes were lifted to the person with whom she was talking, and Roland could see how large and lustrous they were; how exquisite the straight line of the brows; how

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lovely the modelling of cheek and neck. The face was charming, and her dress suited her, as the stem and leaves of a lily flower suit the purely curved white blossom ; a long robe, gathered into many folds, of soft silk, of that palest blue which changes into green as one looks at it, and with no ornaments but two large light sapphires, which trembled and shone in her hair.

Her beauty affected Roland as perfume, or a sudden gleam of light, or a strain of music ; with an arresting charm of grace, and a certain harmony, yet strangeness, in its power.

“ I wonder who she is,” he thought, and glancing at her again, met her eyes, which held a quick look of recognition.

It was gone in a moment, and he turned away, to find himself face to face with a lady he knew.

“ Do you know,” he said, after the first

greeting—"can you tell me who that young lady is in the sea-coloured dress on the couch?"

"That; oh, that's a friend of mine—Miss Anley."

"Where have I heard her name?" thought Roland.

"Do you admire her? I don't, myself; but I know men do as a rule, artists especially. Still the features are *not* regular," said his friend, as inviting contradiction.

"I have eyes to wonder, but lack tongues to praise," quoted Roland. "You wouldn't say about a rose, Mrs. Purcell, that you were sure its leaves were not placed regularly, and that, therefore, it was not beautiful, while it has scent, and hue, and all the day's freshness."

Mrs. Purcell laughed. "Do you want to be introduced to your rose?" she said, "I know her well enough, if you do."

Roland expressed gratitude, saying to himself he wished to discover if she herself realized the promise of her face and form.

Gertrude Anley smiled as he was introduced, and held out her hand.

"You are not a stranger, Mr. Trench," she said, "though I must be one to you. I have heard of you so often from the Gorings."

"Of course," exclaimed Roland, "I remember now."

"My sudden exodus at your appearance," she said. "But I know you did not remember me."

"I thought I had seen you—in a dream."

She laughed, a sweet slight laugh, which told a certain pleasure in the implied compliment.

"If you were any one else," she an-

swered, "I should ask if it were a nightmare, but I feel I know you too well for that."

"Thank you," he said; "but it would be interesting to know what impression of me you have received from the Gorings. I know it is better than I deserve, whatever it is; but I wish you would 'the giftie gie me.'"

"How very humble you are. The Gorings are not here to-night? What a crowd there is: the rooms are quite full."

"Rather too full. Don't you think it is a great mistake?"

"What?"

"Why, crushes of this order. They cannot be society, in the true sense of the word."

"I don't suppose they are, though sometimes one enjoys one's self; and Mrs. Field must ask all the people she knows, at some

time or another, so it saves trouble to have them all at once."

"A social Caligula! But why must every one be asked? and why must one know every one? and why, oh, why—well, I suppose the real question is, why must life be what it is nowadays?"

"What would you have it?"

"Simpler, nobler, so that one might have time to feel its charm."

"Yes," she said, looking up in his face, Her gaze was sympathetic and interested: in truth, she was thinking she had never seen any one better looking than this young man with the fervid face and dark grey eyes.

"There is something wrong at the root of things. We crowd out to talk to two or three hundred people, or look at a thousand pictures in an hour or so."

"You are talking like an artist now," she said, with a rare sweet smile.

"And you don't think a world of artists would do?"

"Oh! I think it would be charming," she answered eagerly.

"I doubt then whether we should realize the ideal artist life, plain living and high thinking."

"Is that the ideal? I never met an artist who realized it, but then I know very few."

"I only know one," he answered, "who does fulfil in his life the ideal of an artist's existence, as he himself realizes for us the ideal artist. Thinking of him, I always remember, 'Who shall abide in Thy tabernacle, who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness and speaketh the truth in his heart.' Hardly

any of us do that. How should we hope to be made ruler over many things, as he is?"

Miss Anley was a little puzzled, for Roland spoke from the prompting of a strong enthusiasm, and grew forgetful of his surroundings, as he told her of the great painter and poet for whom he held so deep and humble a reverence. Yet it was the earnest, upturned look of her strange eyes had led him to speak at such length, while she was wondering what to say in reply.

Finding no words she thought quite safe, she sighed, and was relieved by the appearance of their hostess, to whom she could speak in admiration of the palms.

"I should think at the present moment you would find the ones in the supper-room more to be admired," said Mrs. Field.

"You must be starving. I think there is more room now that the first crush is over. You were very wise not to go down at first."

"I forgot it," said Miss Anley, as Roland offered his arm, and she laid her dainty finger tips upon it.

The supper was magnificent ; a wilderness of palms, a Rubens-like profusion of fruit, the soft, yet vivid, light, and the beauty of the long room, making it, as one enthusiastic lady remarked, "like a dream." There was a crush and crowd of guests, headed by two duchesses, and other stars of scarcely inferior lustre, and at one end of the room was the host, blandly catering to the needs of the handsomest duchess.

"How charming Mr. Field is!" remarked Miss Anley, as Mr. Trench returned to her side with aspic and champagne.

“Lorenzo and Raphael combined,” said Roland. “No, that’s not fair, for he is an awfully good fellow, but—did you ever read the ‘Lost Leader’?”

“Never; what is it about?”

“A very successful man; still it says a great deal for the place Art holds in England, that a painter should be able to live in such a house as this, and give such spreads, from the results of his work.”

“Yes, doesn’t it?” said Miss Anley, eagerly; and there was much more sympathy and comprehension in her tone than there had been when Roland had spoken to her of his ideal artist.

But Roland was in no mood to criticise his companion’s remarks, and let pass, without heeding, what would have jarred on him from anybody else. In truth, Miss Anley was so lovely, the curve of her neck

so exquisite, the full-lidded eyes so beautiful and strange as they looked up at him from under her even brows, it would hardly have been in accordance had she relished satire. It was very pleasant, too, to listen to her bright talk of the nothings which come and go on the stream of social life. She talked well, with a trick of expression and manner, which spoke of some years between her and the shyness of the girl of seventeen just released from the school-room.

"There is mamma," she said, as Roland put down her empty plate for her. "I want to introduce you, Mr. Trench; she admires your pictures so much."

Roland found himself by the side of a handsome middle-aged lady, not like her daughter, but pleasant, with a gracious reserved manner he liked.

"I am very glad to meet you, Mr.

Trench ; I have so often wanted to thank you for your pictures, though I'm afraid my gratitude is of little value, I know so little of art."

"Oh, but we are in very good company, mamma," said her daughter, and the "we" touched some pleasurable chord in Roland's emotion. "Mr. —, and Mr. —, and Mr. —," naming men who were as an abomination in Roland's ears, because of the standpoint from which they regarded Art—priests who profaned the sacrament wine for their common needs. "All told me how much they admired your pictures," she added, turning to Mr. Trench.

It very nearly put him out of temper. He gave a short uncertain laugh, then was angry with himself. Of course she revered those whom she had been brought up to believe in, and the soul

that looked out of her eyes showed how easy it would be to teach her to love only what was really beautiful, and hold a higher criterion by which to judge Art, than the judgment of Messrs. A. and B., whose praise Roland regarded as the most damnatory critique his *work* had yet received.

"I hope to do better than I have done yet," he said, after a pause. "I should wish to paint something really worth your liking."

"Mine! I know so little," Gertrude answered.

"You would feel it," he said, "if it were really good."

"Oh, yes!" was all her answer, in a low deep tone, which stirred the fibres of Roland's sensitiveness strangely.

"Gertrude," said Mrs. Anley, who during this time had been placidly finishing her *foie gras*, "if we are going on to the Roys-

dall's ball, we really ought to leave here now."

Roland escorted Miss Anley to the carriage, and as she leant forward to bid him good-night, he watched the last smile of her eyes, the last tremble under the gas-light of the sapphires in her hair. "What a face!" he thought, as the brougham rolled away.

For a few moments he stood on the doorstep, remembering with a smile the old half-forgotten dreams which had filled the first dawning of manhood within him, before any touch of other passion had marred their fairness. Visions of a face, in the light of which, and to win which, all endeavour, nay, all attainment, seemed possible :—

"A face to lose youth for, to occupy age
With the dream of, meet death with ;"

such a face as "launched a thousand

ships ;" such a face as made Dante record his hope—

“To write more worthily of her ;”

such a face as taught Michael Angelo the full strength of his four souls.

If there were any truth in his old fancies of a face, which should realize not only all joy, but all that life held of good, that one he had just parted with the sight of might inspire them.

So thinking, he turned back into the wide hall, where two young men he knew slightly were talking, one being Max Breynton's special aversion, Mr. Gerard Dayrell.

“Miss Anley,” said this young man, in reply to some remark of his companion's, and speaking slowly, with distinct utterance, caressing his words as though they were precious things. “Yes, she is very wonderful, a most rare and subtle type.

I always have a keen wish to paint her as Gautier's Vampire."

Roland had never shared in Max's frequently expressed desire to kick Mr. Dayrell as he did at that moment.

CHAPTER VII.

“Between two joys a grief grows unawares.”

Atalanta in Calydon.

“THIS is pleasant!” said Max Breynton, in a tone which meant the reverse.

“This” was the crowd at the Academy private view at its thickest, and Max and Roland had just entered the first room.

But Roland held him fast, and they threaded their way through the rooms, and through the humming throngs of well-dressed people, who crowded round the pictures, with their backs turned to them.

“Good Lord!” said Roland, as there passed them a fearful and wonderful

example of the results of every woman doing what seemed right in her own eyes in the matter of dress. "What are we coming to? Oh, for the revival of sumptuary laws!"

"She ought to be arrested," muttered Max; and then a new look of pleasure brightened his face, and he gave a sudden start, which, however, Roland did not perceive, his eyes having taken the same direction as Max's.

"There's—Evelyn," said Mr. Trench. "Where are you off to, Max? You're not really going yet? Come, at least, and say a word to her."

Max turned and yielded, and they were soon by the side of Evelyn Goring, who was standing by her father, in company with another lady, whom Roland had greeted, and who, as Max observed at once, was very fair to see.

Roland had met Miss Anley two or three times since the night of the Fields' "at home." Once in the Park, where he had had the pleasure of sitting by her side under the budding trees, hardly talking, but rapt in a dream of sweet air, blue sky, and the tones of a woman's voice; once at a ball; and one afternoon at the Gorings', when he had learned that she would accompany Evelyn to the Academy private view. He had grown to know the charming face, so that it seemed by this time a part of his life.

"Have you seen Roland's picture yet?" Mr. Breynton asked Evelyn, while Roland and Miss Anley were talking.

Her quiet eyes lit up. "No," she said; "we have only just come. Papa says it is very well hung."

"Will you come and have a look at it?" said Max, hesitatingly.

"Thank you. Papa," she said, touching Mr. Goring's shoulder, who was deep in talk with another brother of the brush, "Mr. Breynton and I are going to have a peep at Roland's picture. Shall we find you here?"

Mr. Goring, with an absorbed nod and a "shows very well," returned to his discussion of a notable picture, and Evelyn and Max found their way through the rooms to the one where Roland's picture was hung.

Max, looking at the girl before him as she stood gazing at the Lamia, noted the quick quiver of triumph and joy and pride that passed over her face. He knew all that it meant, and a sharp spasm of pain shot through his own heart, which he did not pause to analyze. Only, in that moment, he felt the passionate want of something in his own life; knew, too, that he must feel that want for evermore.

"It is something to have done that at four and twenty," he said, at last.

She answered nothing, but at last she sighed a sigh of content; her eyes were wet with exceeding joy. Her love's work was hers; she felt the sweetness of knowing it was good, as Roland himself could hardly do.

"Oh! I'm so glad it is hung on the line."

A voice said this behind them, a woman's—Miss Anley's, who had come with Roland in search of the picture.

Max looked at her curiously, with a certain shy fear, which gave way to an expression of amusement as she added—

"Oh, it is charming! Don't you think so, Evelyn?"

Evelyn was a little perplexed. Charming was not the epithet she should have chosen for Lamia's writhing form, with

the beauty and grace shuddering out of her with each convulsive throb of her dying human life.

"I never can speak," she said in a low voice to Max.

"Deo gratias," rejoined Mr. Breynton, irreverently. "If there is one time when silence is golden, it is before pictures."

"No, I wish I could ; but I always feel any words of mine are so unequal to the thought and the work and the feeling that created a picture, that all I can do is to be silent."

"I wish all women thought the same ! But your feeling needn't apply to most modern Art. There are a good many pictures here that need not oppress you into silence."

Then silence is best, still."

"Only how is one to judge your silence ?"

"I don't think it is worth being judged."

“Your friend does not suffer as you do,” said Max.

They had moved a little way onward, and, turning, saw Miss Anley and Roland in sweet converse ; Roland’s face earnest, interested, as though Miss Anley’s observations equalled Ruskin’s in beauty and interest.

A sick pain, a dim sense of some possible loss, seized Evelyn in that moment. She was not able to answer ; only to wonder if that glimpse of another future, to the one of which she had of late allowed herself to dream of, were a reality, or only a foolish fancy she should be ashamed of.

She was ashamed of it in another minute, for Miss Anley’s attention was claimed by some one else, and Roland came to Eve and Max, a happy light in his eyes, the smile on his lips which of

late always seemed to thrill through Evelyn like a sweet, sharp note of music.

"Have you seen Max's picture?" he asked.

Evelyn laughed. "You and Mr. Breyn-ton are rival exhibitors. He asked me if I had seen yours, and now you ask me about his."

"It is worth looking at," he said. "Come and see it; it is only at the end of the room."

It had no title in the catalogue, only the lines—

"The moving moon went up the sky,
And nowhere did abide;
Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside
Her beams bemoaned the sultry main,
Like April hoar frost spread.
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,
The charmed water burnt alway
A still and awful red."

"Breyn-ton's work always satisfies one,"

said Roland. "Doesn't it you, Eve? It has a wonderful charm for me, that quiet intensity of all he does."

"I feel as if I have never looked at his pictures," said Evelyn, her gaze losing itself in the wide glassy sweep of the lonely sea and the depths of the soft, awful sky. Then, as she turned round again to Roland, "Roland, I want to say what I think of the Lamia, but I cannot."

Her eyes and her voice spoke for her.

"You really like it, Eve? It is very faulty, but I am glad you find something in it."

"Oh! it is wonderful—the very truth!" She had forgotten her silence, as her gaze met his.

"Thank you," he answered, quietly. Then they went back to where Mr. Breyn-ton was standing. "Max," said Roland, "we heard a beautiful criticism of your

work. That very stout old lady in the red bonnet said, 'Well, she had never seen the sea look like that.'

- "You should have answered like Turner, 'Didn't she wish she could?'" said Evelyn. "I wonder where Miss Anley is?"

"I see her in the next room," said Roland. "Did she tell you how we met at the Fields?"

"Yes. I am glad you know her," Evelyn forced herself to feel the words as she spoke. "I knew you would think her beautiful."

"It does not need much thought."

"I don't know about that," said Max. "It is a face which depends very much on the mood and nature of the beholder. I can imagine some people not admiring it at all."

"Does that mean that you don't?"

"No; she is very handsome and strange.

I like to look at her, but I fancy her face might tire."

"I don't agree with you," said Roland, rather impatiently. "There is too much real beauty in it for that."

Max moved rather irritably; there was no need for him to be angered. Roland had drawn no comparison between Gertrude Anley and Evelyn, yet Breynton felt as though there were an implied slight of the latter in Roland's warmth on the subject of Miss Anley's beauty.

He left the Academy before Mr. Trench did, and all along Piccadilly he held before him the face of Evelyn Goring, with its patient, wistful expression, which even her maidenliness could not hide, as she had looked at Roland and Miss Anley.

"Is this what has been the matter with the fellow for the last fortnight?" thought Max. "I couldn't think what was up with

him, he hasn't been like himself. He can't have gone mad on that woman's face all of a sudden, after all he has said? Beauty! *her* face is worth a thousand of that other's. He can't be such a fool! Why shouldn't he be, though? What are we all, but—— My God! if it is so, I'm afraid she'll feel it worse than I can think."

CHAPTER VIII.

“That voice which I did more esteem
Than music in her sweetest key,
Those eyes which unto me did seem
More comfortable than the day ;
Those now by me as they have been
Shall never more be heard or seen ;
But what I once enjoyed in them
Shall seem hereafter as a dream.”

GEORGE WITHER.

THROUGH the next month Evelyn Goring, as it were, held her breath, seeing her cherished hope float further and further out of sight, feeling more and more clearly that Roland had never loved her, in the knowledge that he loved Gertrude Anley.

And through this month Roland was

breathing a charmed air. Mrs. Anley liked him, and had asked him to call on them, and Gertrude had seconded her mother's words by one uplifted glance of eyes. Once there, he often went again. The Anleys were hospitable, and Miss Anley had very much her own way, her brother being at Oxford, and her younger sister, aged twelve, at school in Germany.

Miss Anley came very often to Fainton Cottage, and the time had been when Evelyn had been very glad of the gracious, charming presence ; but now the poor girl felt humbled in her own eyes, as she realized how bitter it was to note the growing of the suppressed passionate reverence in Roland's manner towards Miss Anley ; to see his absorbed gaze at her when the three sat together.

There were times when Evelyn would

make some excuse to leave the room, that she might stand alone, gasping as if for breath, her two hands clenched tightly to her breast, her brain seeming as if it would burst with the strain of a long endurance.

Feverish, restless, nervous, she felt within herself, though she was outwardly as quiet as ever. Her father saw no difference, and she was too proud to admit, even to herself, how the lack of Roland's love seemed to be crushing the sap out of her life.

Still, she never wished that she had taken it when it had been offered to her three years back. The pure pride of maidenliness made her know she had done right then.

But now—oh, now !

Oh, it was hard, very hard, to hear from Miss Anley that Roland had been dining with them the night before, and to hear

from her his hopes and plans, which he had once kept for her ear; very hard, to hear from Roland of Miss Anley's grace and sweetness and supreme charm of womanhood! This beautiful Venus Victrix, thought the poor girl, who had come and seen and conquered the heart which was so dear and precious to her; did she value what she had won?

Yes, that was bitter, too. Evelyn realized keenly that Gertrude loved Roland. She saw the faint flush deepen sweetly on Miss Anley's cheek; she saw how her eyes were lifted when Mr. Trench entered the room. She knew there was no fear that when Roland put his fate to the touch, Gertrude would refuse what she, Evelyn, had once put away from her, unknowing how passionately she would one day crave for it, and prize it before aught the earth could give.

Sometimes there came to her a mad wish that it were all over ; that Roland and Gertrude had told her themselves of the love she had divined ; that she need not, when she was alone, walk up and down in the garden in the twilight, the quiet of which only seemed to make her head and heart ache more, while the cool breeze seemed to flush her burning cheeks, as she wondered when the end would come, wishing, wretchedly, that it would.

Yet when it came, it seemed only too quickly.

She was sitting in the garden one sweet night in early June, on the same seat that she had been on three years ago, the evening Roland had asked her to be his wife.

Three years ago. Was it no more ? was it no less ? She could almost fancy it was the same evening ; that in a few more

moments she would see Roland coming across the lawn to her in the dim light, and that——

No, never more *that*. Oh, why, she thought to herself, almost with a sob, could she not be more brave ?

She had need to be brave, for a figure was advancing towards her in the gathering dusk, growing clearer as it came near. A woman's form, lithe and tall and graceful ; and a happy voice called out, " Evelyn, Eve, dear, where are you ? "

Poor Evelyn ! A verse rang through her head, " Behold, that which I dreaded is come upon me." For one moment she put out her hands, as though fearing a blow ; then she called out, in a steady voice, " I am here, Gertrude ; is it you ? "

Vaguely and strangely she felt Gertrude's kiss. She knew that Gertrude herself was kneeling by her side, looking

far more lovely than she had ever done before, with the new exquisite mingling of shamefaced joy and pride in her face.

"Oh, Eve, I am so happy—so very happy! Can you guess?"

"Yes,"

"Evelyn, dear, are you glad?"

It was well she did not need an answer, for Evelyn could not have spoken, or if she had done so, it would have been in the sharp tone of agony of one whose heart feels the sudden prick of a sword.

"It is so beautiful that he loves me!" said Gertrude, with a new tenderness in her tone; "so beautiful, that he thinks me——" A sweet blush touched her cheek.

"You will make him happy?"

Gertrude Anley looked up, a little puzzled by the earnest, almost imploring tone.

"He says I have done so," she answered, with a low, happy laugh. "And, Eve, I love him so much. Do you know that when I saw him for the first time, that moment in your drawing-room, I thought that I had never seen so beautiful a face. I like to dream over it and remember it."

"I always liked Roland's face." Evelyn felt she must say something.

"Yes; but then it is not to you what it is to me—the only one on earth."

And then Evelyn knew one of the worst pains which a woman in her case must endure—the fierce, jealous pain of a girl who hears and cannot deny the better right of another woman to the knowledge of the man she loves. She knows that she herself has loved him longer, more closely, more utterly, than this other ever will; but she is nothing, and this other is all.

In that moment she did not conquer or even struggle against the sudden swelling and overflow of the bitter waters which filled her heart. An absolute misery, a barren, desolate despair, seemed to take possession of her. She was nothing to Roland, nothing for evermore; could do him no service, give him no joy; the world would be as well to him if she were dead.

She wondered to hear her own voice sound so natural and quiet, as she asked—

“When was it?”

“Only to-day. I have come to tell you before any one, and he is coming to fetch me back. I wanted to be the first to let you know.”

Evelyn's eyes dilated. It was too dark for the girl by her, absorbed in her own happiness, to see the hunted, frightened look, as of a stag at bay, on the poor

child's face. In very truth, Eve felt that she could not bear to see Roland, and yet what excuse could she make? None.

She stifled and crushed down the pain at her heart, thinking dully that she did not want to be a hypocrite. When she had time to ponder it, she really meant to try and be glad that Roland was happy, and to hope that his new love—his love, so far fairer than she—would be all to him that she had once dreamt she might be. She could not think over it all just now; she could only live on from moment to moment. She felt as though her real life had ended when she had seen Gertrude coming to her in the faint light, and she was a ghost now, listening to a happy living being.

Five minutes later, she knew only too well she was no ghost yet; for as her hand shook in Roland's close, warm grasp,

she felt the old passionate quiver through her being, and knew the hard work that lay before her, ere her hand should rest as quietly in his as in any other man's.

In after days she could not remember exactly what passed after Roland joined them. She knew that his voice had changed; that there was a thrill in it of infinite confidence and hope and joy that she had never heard in it before; and when they went into the house, she saw his face in the light, so glad and tender and brave, as he looked at the woman he had won for his wife.

Later in the evening, he and Evelyn were alone in the hall, while Miss Anley and Mr. Goring were still talking in the drawing-room.

"Eve," he said, taking both her hands, as his old custom had been, "You have not wished me joy."

"You have it," she said; "better than my——"

"Yes," and his voice told such gladness—"but, Eve, I want your good wishes, you have been so much to me."

Till now he had forgotten all the old memories between himself and her—had forgotten everything but Gertrude Anley; but his own words brought back his recollections.

So much to him! What, it struck him with an infinite self-shame and self-reproach—what if he had been more to her?

He dared not look at her, fearing to read in her face that he had done her harm. He had never held himself worthy of Evelyn Goring; but what if, according to that obnoxious natural law that rules our own actions—nay, our own feelings as to ourselves—may involve the feelings of

others--he, while he had been pondering whether Eve was the one woman in the world for him (the question now decided in the negative), had grown nearer to her heart than he had thought ?

He had never been smitten so sharply by self-disdain and indignation as he was at the bare thought. He was hateful to himself; he felt himself utterly unworthy of his present joy, and, strangely enough, there was mingled a faint shadow of unexplainable regret with his sensations.

That had gone in a moment; but it was in a yearning, almost suppliant tone, as if asking for pardon, that he said—

“ Eve.”

The tone comforted her, she did not know why, even while she felt as though her heart must break; but the bitter, bad feeling had gone, as she looked up and said—

"I do wish you all joy, Roland, you and Gertrude;" and her voice was so calm, the gaze so clear and full, it banished his dread.

CHAPTER IX.

“When first my eyes saw thee,
I found me thy thrall,
By magical drawings,
Sweet tyrant of all.
Love drinks at thy fountain
False waters of thirst ;
Thou intimate stranger,
Thou latest and first.”

EMERSON, *Ode to Beauty*.

IDYLLIC honey, touched with a few drops of prosaic acid, just sufficient to give poignancy to the sweetness, represented Roland's life in the days immediately following the one when he and Gertrude Anley, having drawn nearer each other day by day, had, by some slight magnetic

movement, touched and clasped each other's hearts.

The honey was worthy of Theocritus. A man never knows a woman till she loves him and has confessed her love; and Roland Trench found a fresher and keener delight day by day in Gertrude Anley's fondness. He "read no other books but her sweet looks," and his brushes were idle as he studied the face which for him held the very secret of beauty.

And the acid was not very sharp; it could hardly be accounted as deadening his honey that Max Breynton's sympathy was less full and less warmly expressed than he could have wished it to be. Max's misogynic views were well known to him, and he had hardly reckoned on any very hearty congratulation from him. Still Roland fancied there was an undernote of real sadness and disappointment in the

little he said, though he did his best to conceal it, and Mr. Trench was rather at a loss to understand his friend's real feeling on the matter.

The chief drop of acid, after all, was the necessary discussion of money matters with Mr. Anley, Gertrude's father—a commonplace man, with a large income, a mind given to blue books, and with a very small appreciation of art, except as a fitting decoration for dining-rooms. Roland had never felt, as he did during his first interview with Mr. Anley after his engagement, what objectionable points in his character were his being a younger son, and his having adopted such a "singularly risky profession," so Mr. Anley termed it, as the pursuit of art.

Mr. Anley was rather surprised at his daughter's choice, though he liked Roland himself; but he had never looked on Ger-

trude in the light of a possible wife for a poor man ; and, in spite of Roland's father promising to raise his son's allowance to £500 a year, and many assurances both from Gertrude and her mother that Roland could make what he liked by his pictures, he persisted in regarding young Trench as poor.

Still, he did not forbid the engagement ; it was more Gertrude's affair than his. If she had set her heart on trying love in a cottage—— Mr. Anley's experience had too fully convinced him of the strength of the feminine will, for him to wish to thwart her.

"If she didn't do what she liked," he remarked with acumen to his wife, "she'd make us so d——d uncomfortable, that we should wish she had."

So he gave his consent, and told Roland he should allow his daughter £400 a year.

Mr. Trench was young and foolish enough to wish he could refuse this, but Gertrude would not let him.

“If we have it,” she said—as she sat with her lover in the morning-room at the Anley’s house in Eaton Place, the forenoon sunshine falling on her face and showing the skin as flawless in its clearness and fineness as were the creamy roses at her throat—“you know I shan’t feel so guilty if I am extravagant in my dress, and I want to be nice—for you.”

With that bright head touching his shoulder at the last words, with a slight, almost involuntary caress, Roland could feel nothing but the sweetness of the exquisite boon, his now, and yet to be more fully his in the future ; and he looked at her with the fresh wonder at the beauty which every day “newed” to his eyes.

“I should like to clothe you like the

sun," he said, "if you wished it; only to me you look loveliest in a white gown, such as you have on now, and that cannot cost much."

"Which it did not—according to a French milliner's estimate."

"After all," said Roland, after a short pause, "providing we don't indulge in £300 hacks and diamond bracelets, we ought to be very comfortable on £500 a year, besides what I make with my work."

"It is the 'besides,'" said Gertrude. "Why, Roland, you can make what you like, after your great success—everybody says so."

"Except your father," returned Roland, with a laugh. "I would rather take his view of art being a very speculative affair, and not to be taken into one's calculations, except to a certain extent."

"How do you mean?" said Gertrude,

rather puzzled. "You are sure to sell what you paint."

"That is not quite so sure. You are not behind the scenes yet." Then his voice grew rather more earnest. "You must help me, sweetheart. I know myself, and I know that, if I am to do my best, I cannot possibly paint much in a year. I would rather never send in more than one picture to the Academy at a time, and that should represent the best part of my year's work, except study and sketches; so, you see, we shall not grow rich very fast."

"And yet you want to refuse four hundred a year, you foolish boy."

"Are you afraid?" he said, such a fond trust and pride in his tone. "Can you make up your mind to be a poor man's wife?"

"Afraid!" she echoed. "But, Roland,

you will not be poor ; you want to make your name, and that means money as well, though it may sound horrid to say so."

"I want to do my best," he said ; "and if that is worth anything, the name will come. But really, dear, if you can face it, I think £500 a year will be just the right medium ; not enough to allow me to forego exertion—and you don't know how lazy I am if I get the chance—and yet enough to prevent the temptation of pot-boilers."

Gertrude shook her head. "I begin to agree with mamma," she said, demurely, "that men know nothing of expense ; and, Roland, I am very proud, I don't like to come to you and bring nothing."

"You—you have brought me all," he said, with a sudden burst of tenderness. "You make all things new to me. How can I ever pay you ?"

"By making me very proud of you," she whispered, yielding herself with a gracious shyness to the close clasp of his arm.

And he held the purpose of her wish to himself as his end and aim, only it was doubtful if what would satisfy her pride would content him.

So a fortnight slipped away, and then Gertrude went down to Colethorpe, to stay with Roland's people, Roland accompanying her; and Dora Trench wrote an enthusiastic letter to Evelyn Goring, of delight in her sister-in-law elect.

Through those pleasant summer days, spent by Roland and Gertrude under the shadow of trees, amid the sweetness of the loose, tossed hay, Evelyn felt as though all her old life had been snapped suddenly and thrown behind her. Yet the outside life went on the same, or nearly so. She

managed the house, ordered the dinner, played and sang to her father of an evening, paid calls, and went out to some dances and a few dinners during the season.

Only when she was alone, and had nothing that must be done, she did not occupy herself, only sat with idle hands, and wide, vacant eyes, trying vainly to look out into the long years of life which stretched out before her, wide and grey, like a sunless ocean, into the distance of the future.

One evening, indeed, when her father was out, her eyes fell on the old volume of Schubert Roland had given her years ago; and, moved by many memories, she put it on the piano, and sat down and turned the pages till she came to the "Serenade."

She sung through the first verse, the dying, passionate sweetness and sadness

of the song quivering through her, but her heart kept still by a strong effort; but when she had begun the second verse, her voice faltered, trembled, and she broke down suddenly, sobbing, sobbing, sobbing as though her heart would break.

CHAPTER X.

“The Gospel of the Discobolus.”

BUTLER.

“EVE, have you anything particular to do to-day?”

“No, papa; what do you want me for?”

“It’s nothing very important, but I want a copy of a drawing of some Keltic ornaments, a brooch and a bishop’s crozier, for my picture. I don’t know any copy of the book, except the one at the British Museum. I can tell you the volume you will find it in, and the page. I made a note of them when I was at the Museum last, but I can’t spare time to go there and copy them myself.”

“ Oh, I will go ; I should like it.”

Eve had helped her father in this manner before. She had a correct eye, which had been well trained, and the loving detail of the ornamental art of past ages had a singular fascination for her, though she had never cultivated her taste for it by more ambitious efforts than very delicate copies of the capitals of pillars, the quaint grotesqueness of a gargoyle, the detail of old carved wood, or the intricacies of an eleventh-century initial letter.

She finished her breakfast, despatched her household matters, and started for the Museum. The work there did not take her very long, though she grew interested in the elaborate convolutions of the crozier's ornament, and rendered them with more delicate finish than would be needful for her father's purpose. She was glad of the work, glad of something which should

take her away from her own thoughts. She had received a letter from Gertrude Anley that morning, asking her to be one of her bridesmaids. She would rather not have been one, but it did not matter much one way or the other, the core of her pain lay too deep to be pricked by such outside touches.

She left the library, and almost involuntarily wandered through to the sculpture galleries ; the Græco-Roman rooms, where the statues seem silent with the languorous sadness of exceeding loveliness, and the sweet passionless composure of the Townley Clytie satisfies the outward sense. It seemed to increase her sadness, the dumb and gracious presence of these relics of a dead beauty, and each fair head and curved throat of Phoibos or Aphrodite, or the regnant calm of large-eyed Hera's brows, seemed to strangely quicken the ache of

her heart to sharper pain and unavailing longing after the fairness of life, of which these were the exquisite expression.

But she passed on towards the mightier majesty of the Elgin marbles, and stood before "those great shapes of an antique time," the supremeness of whose beauty holds as deep a calm as that of mountains. Something in that glory of greatness seemed to hush the girl's passionate heart into stillness, with the overpowering sense of a beauty she herself was too weak to grasp the fulness of. There was an impulse in her which, if she had been alone with those forms of an heroic age, would have made her sink on her knees, forgetting her own littleness in their greatness, their effortless strength. She grew calm in their calm. The world was not dead while these wonders remained. She was standing before the Fates, absorbed in the

majesty of their beauty, when some one at the end of the gallery quickened his steps towards her.

“Miss Goring!”

She turned round, a real gladness in her face as she saw Max Breynton.

He looked at her as they greeted, and his eyes perceived what none others had, the traces of a present pain. She knew he could not comfort her, and he wished so earnestly that she should not feel any need of comfort. He had thought of her so much of late.

“So you are with the marbles?” he said. “I never see them but I am more sure yet they are the greatest things that have ever yet been done. Are you alone?”

“Yes, and I ought to be going back; I have rather outstayed my time.”

“Let me get you a cab,” said Max, as he walked along by her through the galleries.

"No, thank you. I came in one, and I have had no walking to-day. I mean to walk home."

"By yourself? I beg your pardon," said Max, apologising as best he could, "but it is a long way."

"O no!" answered Miss Goring; "only along Oxford Street and across the Park."

Max's Bohemianism was like most men's, of but a partial and local character, and did not hinder his objecting to Miss Goring's solitary walk home; and perhaps there was mingled another feeling with his objection, which he did not avow to himself, as he said abruptly—

"I wish you would let me see you home."

She laughed; she had grown so accustomed to taking care of herself, that there was something amusing to her in the idea of her needing an escort. "It is very

kind of you," she answered ; " but it will be taking you a very long way out of your road."

Max chose to consider this as a permission, and they left the Museum.

They did not talk very much. Max was engaged with his own thoughts, and Evelyn was never gifted with a very large flow of small talk. Besides this, she rather shrank from mention of Roland, lest, however well she controlled herself, some chance word or tone might reveal her secret ; while Max, on his part, was frightened of saying anything that would or might hurt her, so held his peace on the subject of his friend.

But both felt there was something unnatural in this very silence, and at last Evelyn determined to break it ; led, too, partly by that odd delight of women in secret self-torture, and partly by the strange

pleasure it was to her still to speak his name, she said—

“Have you heard from Roland lately?”

Max started: perhaps he understood part of her motives in asking him the question, so he answered easily, without looking at her—

“No, I suppose I’m not to expect much correspondence now. I shall miss him in the studio.”

“I think they will be married very soon. Miss Anley wrote to me this morning.”

“She is a friend of yours, is she not? I have never seen her, except that day at the Academy.”

“You will like her very much; she is beautiful and clever, and very fond and proud of him.”

“You think him fortunate?” said Max, in an odd tone.

“Yes;” she said, quietly, but in her

heart she knew that though she spoke the truth, she yet thought Gertrude Anley won more than she gave.

“Call no man happy till after he is dead—or till he has been married ten years; but I am glad you think Roland has found a woman who is worth him.” Max took care to hide the suspicion of savage sarcasm, which his words held to himself, from Evelyn’s ear.

“One does not judge people being worth others in that way,” said Evelyn. “Love makes the balance even on either side.”

“That is a way of accounting for the Diomed and Sarpedon exchanges one sees,” said Max. “I suppose Shakespeare thought so, but he usually makes the woman play Sarpedon. Your theory is the only one which would reconcile one—and one needs something to do so—to Posthumus getting Imogen; Bassanio,

Portia; the fantastical duke of dark corners, Isabel; and—and Bertram, Helen.”

“I don’t like Helen,” said Evelyn.

“Neither do I much; but she was too good for the scamp she married.”

“I don’t know. I have rather a weakness for Bertram; I think he was very badly used.”

“Have women in general a fancy for rather limp men?”

Max spoke quite gravely, but she laughed.

“I’m not prepared with a theory,” she said, “as Coleridge was, when he said it was reserved for Shakespeare to discover the perfection of a woman was to be characterless.”

“Where does he say that? I remember. It’s in that meandering ‘Table Talk,’ isn’t it?”

“Yes.”

"I recollect, and he goes on to remark that men always desire a Desdemona or Ophelia for a wife, 'creatures who, though they may not feel with you, always feel for you'—pleasant for them."

"You don't agree with him?"

"He was rather unfortunate in the examples he chose. Ophelia's characterlessness made her play the spy on Hamlet, and tell him a downright lie, so as to destroy his trust in her; and Desdemona did nearly the same. Her falsehood about the handkerchief confirms Othello's doubts; if she hadn't told it."

"There would have been no tragedy."

"I can't say I much care for either young woman, all the same." There was rather a queer look on Mr. Breynton's face, followed by an expression of some amusement as he and Evelyn entered the Park gates, and struck across towards Kensing-

ton, as he thought it was certainly a new experience for him to be escorting a young lady. He was rather ashamed of himself, and the feeling was increased by the reflection that his company must certainly be a bore to Miss Goring, and that he had hardly shown much tact in forcing it on her.

This made him refuse, when Evelyn asked him to come in, when they arrived at Fainton Cottage. A sudden access of his old shyness had seized him, and he bade her good-bye rather abruptly, sweet as her voice sounded to him, as she thanked him for coming with her and held out her hand.

"And he might have had her, and did not," he thought. "What was the boy about?"

CHAPTER XI.

"Et ego in Arcadia vixi."

THE weeks passed on very quickly towards the time of Roland's and Gertrude Anley's wedding, which was fixed for the first week in September. There was no particular reason for delay. Gertrude was willing enough to do what Roland liked, and when he told her how much he wished for the constant sweetness of her presence, and said how bright the sweep of her dress, the gleam of her hair, in his studio, would make the winter days, she consented, and looked forward, with an inward half-shrinking, half-pleasurable wonder and excite-

ment, to her new life as the wife of a rising artist.

Mr. Trench gave his son £500 towards the furnishing, and Mr. Anley presented Gertrude with a like sum; and then came *trousseau* buying, house hunting, and the garnering of household treasures, all of which Gertrude enjoyed; Roland not so much, though he liked her pleasure and the community of their interests.

But——

He could not help feeling something that vexed him in the detail and the general spirit of their household plenishing. Gertrude had been used to a large income, and if she had to choose anything, from a dress to a water-jug, it never occurred to her not to take the one she liked the best, without counting the cost; and this trait of her education came into play now. It was not this that vexed Roland; he, him-

self, judging such things, would most surely have chosen the purest in form and best in colour, and Gertrude's taste, though rather feminine and rococo and apt to be swerved by the fashion of the moment, was yet graceful, and the things she chose pleased her lover.

But she chose so many. There was an elaboration in the ornament of their future home which Roland felt alien to his ideal life. He had never liked the modern art life, crowded with *biblots*, both real and metaphorical; the setting of the raiment above the body of life, so that the body was apt to be crushed by the weight of the gorgeous folds, and the spirit, that should underlie all, suffocated. His own taste would have led him rather to the refining, by the simplifying, of the details of life. He would have preferred the illuminations to be kept for the frontispieces and initial

letters, not to be wandering over the text, increasing its brightness, but destroying its legibility. Let the writing be straight and clear and fine, so that one might read without hindrance of blot or stain what was written therein, and what more was needed?

With Gertrude, what artistic fibre there was in her nature showed itself in the choosing and combining of colours and stuffs, the arranging of flowers, in short, the art of furnishing. "She will make a good wife for an artist," said one of her friends. "She has such perfect taste," and already in her mind had arisen the desire of making her home, not only beautiful to suit her and Roland's tastes, but so perfect in the novelty and harmony of its arrangement, that the outward world should envy it, and cite it as the model of an artist's home.

She did not imagine, however, that she could realize all her ideas at once ; she knew too well the cost of beautiful plenishing, of parquet floors, Eastern embroideries, old Persian tiles and cunning marqueterie ; but she determined that whatever she did should be in the right direction, and she won Roland to her wishes as to the house they should take.

Roland himself had been much drawn towards an old house in Bloomsbury, with large rooms, wide passages, old mahogany doors, set in architraves of carved wood, painted cream colour, and delicate old plaster work of the last century adorning the ceilings. The rent was moderate, and there was a capital studio.

But Gertrude had fixed on, as the goal of her wishes, a house in South Kensington, one of a new road of red-brick buildings, some already completed, others in

course of erection. The road was especially designed, as the builder's prospectus stated, "to suit the needs and desires of artists," an announcement which caused a curious twitch of amusement of the muscles of Roland's mouth. Still it was a pretty house, the one Gertrude had fixed on, with an angular staircase with carved balusters, an enormous studio, and an equally enormous rent.

Roland demurred at the rent, and hinted likewise that he thought they should be over housed.

"But I want Dora to have a room kept for her always," said Gertrude, "so that she may feel it her own, and come up when she likes, and then—— Oh, Roland, I do like the house so!"

And that "Oh, Roland," and Gertrude's wistful tone, settled the question.

The house was taken and furnished to

a certain extent; not fully, as Gertrude said she should want the amusement of arranging things when they were married. They would be coming back to town before anyone else did, and as she knew Roland would think of his work before her, she should want some occupation.

They were to be married from Vaneholm, Mr. Anley's place in Kent, and the Trenches and Evelyn Goring were among the people who were to stay there for the wedding. Mr. Goring had been asked, but was unable to go; and Roland, at Gertrude's own pretty suggestion, had asked Max Breynton.

"Don't," Max growled out rather gruffly. "Don't ask me. I should be like a fish out of water among all your fine folk. I don't know them, and they don't know me. I shouldn't know what to do or say."

So Roland desisted, knowing Breynton

meant what he said, and went on packing up his various belongings in the studio.

"Where are you going to after the day?" asked Max, after a pause.

"We've only settled for the first week. We mean to take a boat up the river to Oxford and back—what do you say to that for an idyllic honeymoon?"

"It's lucky you and Miss Anley are both in love, and I hope the weather will suit. What after that?"

"I don't know; but anyway we shall be back before October. We are both determined that we won't pay visits either to Vaneholm or Colethorpe for the inspection of our families, so we are coming straight home to set to work. I have been idle quite long enough."

"And I've been at work quite long enough for to-day," said Max, giving a tremendous yawn. "What are you going

to do this evening? Miss Anley's gone down to Kent, hasn't she?"

"Yes."

"Stay, and have something here, then, and go to a theatre afterwards. I want to see 'Camoens.' Have you seen it?"

"Yes, it's good; quite worth going to again."

A scratch meal was partaken of. It was not of a particularly luxurious nature, for Max was habitually indifferent as to what he ate, and Roland was one of those fortunately constituted people who combine an artistic appreciation of a good dinner with the power of resting perfectly contented with cold beef.

"I went to see Goring this afternoon," said Roland, during the course of dinner. "Evelyn was out."

Max was never sure whether his friend was blameworthy or not in respect to

Evelyn; but certain it was, that it invariably "riled" him to hear Roland mention her name in a friendly, unconcerned way. He knew that Evelyn had loved Trench, and though he reverently veiled his eyes, as it were, before what her feelings must be now, it pierced him to the heart to know that she must surely suffer.

"I don't think Goring is very well," said Roland, after a pause. "He says that he's been feeling out of sorts for a long time, and when Evelyn goes down to Vaneholm he is going to be hauled over."

"What's the matter with him?" said Max, anxiously. "Anything serious?"

"I can't tell; he doesn't know himself. I hope not, for Evelyn's sake as well as his own. She's wrapt up in him, poor child."

"What would she do?" thought Max, "if only"—and for one moment—the

thought seemed hardly born in his mind before it died, and he mentally anathematized himself for a fool.

"So you'll be back in October," said Max, in a reflective manner, later, when they had left the studio and were sauntering along under the shadow of the trees, which grew in the gardens at the side of the road. Have you any idea for your Academy picture?"

"A vague one," said Roland. "I like the fancy, if I can carry it out, and Gertrude will sit for the face." But he did not volunteer what the idea was, only went on thinking, a new light in his eyes, as he dwelt on his picture and Gertrude Anley.

Max looked at him with a certain pang, not of envy—he was far too fond of Roland for that—but realizing how different life must seem when it still possesses a

future, and something of this came out in his next words.

"Ah, you are a happy fellow. You don't yet know what life may have in store for you, and you have no reason to dread it. You haven't even an idea exactly how far your power will carry you."

"Neither have you."

"Yes, I have. I know exactly how much it is in me to do; and precious little it is."

"I wish you'd teach me the secret of knowing oneself," said Roland. "I believe it's at the bottom of all mastery."

Max shook his head. "No," he said. "'The tree of knowledge is not that of life!' Byron knew a thing or two, and that was one of them. There was a time when I hadn't gauged my own measure, and might have done more than I ever shall now, for that very reason."

Roland made no answer. He was thinking how different everything had seemed to him since he had "looked into his queen's full eyes," and wondering whether, if Max loved a woman, a like transformation would be worked for him; but the ideas of Max and Eros did not seem compatible.

"Your life has been rather a lonely one, old fellow," he said at last. "If——"

Max burst out laughing. "Just like you youngsters," he said; "determined to try your own remedy on every one, and quite certain your grandmother never sucked an egg in her life. Why, man, I went through all that while you were puzzling over the Asses' Bridge, or before you reached it."

"Oh, you did!" said Roland; which was hardly a sympathetic way of receiving a confidence, but which was really the only

thing he could say, he felt so staggered. Then it came to him what a fool he was. Knowing Max Breynton as he did, should he not have guessed that it was in him to have given his whole heart to a woman, careless of what she might render him in return ? He looked at Breynton, and saw his face in the light of the newly risen moon. "I didn't mean to chaff, old fellow," he said. "I'm awfully sorry if——" The words died on his lips.

"It's nothing," said Max ; "only a folly twelve years old."

They walked on in silence, till Breynton continued—

"Roland, I'll tell you ; though I don't know why I should speak of it, after all this time, and it's a story without a moral—at any rate, for you."

"That isn't fair, Max. But don't tell me if you would rather not."

"It's nothing to tell. The oddity is that I should remember it all these years. It was when I was twenty-two, working at the Academy, and had just started a studio of my own in Charlotte Street. I didn't only stick to the sea then; I had a weakness for women's faces—thought them, what I suppose they may be, the most beautiful things under the sun."

They walked a little way onward before he continued—

"There was one girl, a model, who sat to me once or twice for her face. She wouldn't sit for the undraped figure to any one. She was different, rather, as I thought, to the usual set, and she was a grand creature as to her beauty—one of those sweet-looking women, with a mouth like a ripe rosebud, and pale olive skin, and large soft eyes as dark as her hair. I made two or three studies of her—beastly

daubs they must have been—and heard a little about her ; not from herself, she was reserved enough. She was the daughter of a widow, and had one sister : both girls were as good as they could be. They were very poor, but the father and mother had been in a better position.” Here he paused.

“ Well ! ” said Trench.

“ I didn’t see anything more of her for some time, and then I heard from another man, whom Alice—that was her name—had sat to, that her mother had died, that her sister wanted to emigrate, and that the two girls were trying to raise the money for the purpose, but could not do it in time for the girl to go by the ship in which she wished to sail, and something made her loth to lose the chance. There was no way but one—that Alice should sit as an Academy model, and so earn a larger

rate of pay. Then she would be able to scrape the money together in time; but this she had an intense horror of.

"I remember thinking if I couldn't offer them the money somehow or another, and shrinking from doing so, like a young fool, lest my motives should be wronged. What the deuce would it have mattered if they had been? At last I resolved to do so, but it was too late. Old Clinton, the Academician, who liked and respected Alice, did his best to persuade her to sit. I think the poor child had a very hard fight of it with herself before she gave in. I knew nothing of this till one evening, when we who belonged to the life-class at the Academy were waiting for the door to open, one man said to me, 'Do you know who is the model to-night? Alice D——. She's given in.'"

Max stopped.

"Well?" asked Roland.

"I felt queer, almost sick, as though I were going to assist in a murder. If I could, I should have turned and left the place, but something made me stay; and just then Clinton—he was the visitor that month—threw open the doors, and there was Alice, ready posed.

"I don't know what I did. I suppose I took my place, and scratched some lines on my board. I suppose I looked at her, but I was hardly conscious of anything but a burning wish to save her the agony I saw in the drooped eyes and still mouth.

"Two or three times Clinton asked her whether she would rest, but she only slightly shook her head, with a quiver of the eyelids and the tightly-closed lips. What she endured," said Max, a kindred pain on his own face after all these years, "I can't tell, but she couldn't move; she

could only stand as she was placed ; and all at once a shudder ran through her, and she dropped in a heap on the floor, in a dead faint.

“ There was a stir and a noise. All I felt was a wild wish to kill old Clinton, or all the other men, or myself for a beast ; and then I thought how I could have saved her from it. The first thing I heard, to remember, was a careless ‘ She’ll get over it ’ from the fellow next to me—a boy with a bad, handsome face. The blood rushed to my face, and I swore in my heart she never should get used to it, if I could help it ; and I knew I loved her, had loved her for a long time.”

Roland said nothing ; he only felt he had never known Max till now.

“ Well, I looked her up, and asked her to marry me. I was a fool ; I ought to have remembered that she couldn’t care

for me of a sudden in this way, and that the temptation to be free of the life she hated was very strong. But I didn't think of all this, and when she said 'Yes'—I tell you I was a fool. It wasn't so much her fault; I might have told she didn't love me. She had only loved one man, and he was married; his wife died, and he asked her to marry him. She never told me of him or of her story: there was no blame in that, but she might have trusted me more. As it was, she played with me through sheer timidity; for he could not marry at once, and she kept putting off, as I thought, our marriage, till one day I had a letter, telling me all, and saying she had been married to him the day before."

"She must have been a bad lot," was Roland's not unnatural comment.

"That's what I tried to console myself

with," said Max, with a half laugh ; "but it wouldn't do. She was modest and sweet-tempered and affectionate : all that was real ; but she had no courage and no truth. Poor girl ! The man she married turned out a scamp and a beast. She left him, went back to her old profession, and—she has got used to it."

Six months ago his words would have been bitterer, but now the thought of Evelyn Goring softened them, and he could think more kindly of the woman who had wronged him, with a wrong which had been a far deeper and more enduring pain than he had let show in his words.

"So I went back to my work," he said, after a while ; "and that's the beginning and end of my love story, Roley. You'd better forget it in your own. I'm glad you are happy, old boy, and I think your wife will be the same."

CHAPTER XII.

Othello. If it were now to die,
'Twere now to be most happy ; for I fear
My soul hath her content so absolute,
That not another comfort like to this
Succeeds in unknown fate.

Desdemona. The heavens forbid
But that our loves and comforts should increase,
Even as our days do grow.

Othello, Act ii. Scene 1.

It was universally agreed by the guests who were gathered together at Vaneholm, to honour Gertrude Anley's marriage, that it "went off very well." The bride looked beautiful in her lily-like garb, and those of the villagers and farmers round Vaneholm, who were allowed to see the

show, expressed the opinions of their social superiors when they said that "a handsomer couple never stepped."

Indeed Roland Trench and she whom he had taken to be his wife were worth looking at, as they stood together in symbol of the oneness which should link them to one another from henceforth. Roland, tall, and with a strange fervid beauty of great joy in his face, as he took the hand of the girl by him, looking very queenly and beautiful in her white robes, with the light catching the curves of her bright hair.

Yet some might have turned from her, to look at one of the girls who stood in a cluster behind her. Evelyn was by no means the prettiest of the bridesmaids, but there was something about her which marked her apart from them, an utter lack of self-consciousness, a quiet yet most

sweet grace of earnest simplicity, as she stood with her hands clasped, her head a little bent. So still she kept, while she heard the words from Roland's lips, which made it a sin for her to think of him again, as she had done till now.

That was the worst. If she might still have kept her love for him, as a secret treasure for her own sad joy, she felt that she could have borne it better ; but she knew well that there was but one right thing for her to do, and that was to crush this feeling and fling it out of her heart. And how could she, when it had so clung and interwoven itself about her, so as to be part of her being ? She could not—all at once—she did not know how to do so ; she could not guess when the fight she must wage with herself should have an end. All she could do as yet was to say to herself, “ I hope he will be happy ; I do

hope he will be happy ; " but some vague dread prevented her from trying to pierce the veil, which hid the secret of her feelings even from herself.

All this made, as it were, the background of her visit to Vaneholm ; the foreground was the usual bridesmaid and young lady life at a country house. The Trenches, Roland's father and mother, with their daughter Dora, were going to stay three days with the Anleys after the wedding, and it was arranged that Evelyn should return to town with them. Evelyn consented, but oh, what a long three days those were !

Roland and Gertrude spent the first week of their honeymoon according to their original intention, and the eighth evening of their marriage found them in a boat, moored under the shadow of some trees that grew on the bank of the

river, not far from Henley. From where they were they could watch the moonlit river, flowing on in a happy silence, and stirred at times by those sweeping, changing shivers which crossed its surface. The fields on the other side were pale in the moonlight, the trees and hedges very dark, and now and then a faint rustle of breeze crept over the trees, and through the sedge and rushes, and stirred the broad water-lily leaves, which still slept on the breast of the river, though the time of the white blossoms was over.

A silence more passionate than speech filled Roland's heart, as he sat at his wife's feet in the boat, both his hands clasping hers, his eyes looking up at her, loving the outline of her head against the deep dark sky. It was still a sweet wonder to him that she was really his.

"I shall be so sorry," said Gertrude,

"when we reach Richmond : this week has been like a dream."

"It is a dream which is our life ; or the dearest part of it is. I don't know though ; this has been so perfect, I wonder if it can last."

"Don't be gloomy," said Gertrude, bending a little towards him. "Why should it not?"

"Why?" he echoed idly. "There's no reason, I suppose ; but then there isn't much reason in the world in general."

"Roland ! I don't know what is the matter with you," his wife said, laughingly. "I shall begin to think that——"

"Think nothing, except I love you and you have made me utterly happy ; if you are but the same, dear."

There was silence for a little time, then Gertrude said, in a tone of energetic resolution—

"We really must make up our minds where we are going."

"Well," returned her husband, rolling a cigarette, "what is our mind? I gave it unto your keeping."

"What an idle boy you are," she said, the caressing epithet falling from her lips with just that timidity of strangeness which made it enchanting to Roland's ears. "If you won't make up your mind, you shall go back to your work at once."

"Very well. I want to begin my new picture; but remember you have to sit for it, so you will suffer more than I shall."

"What is it, Roland?"

"Prince Athanase."

"I am just as wise as I was before, Monsieur."

"I must teach you to love Shelley, child."

"I only know two things of his, something about a widowed bird and 'the Sky-

lark;" which I had to learn as a punishment when I was in the schoolroom. But what is 'Prince Athanase'?"

"It is a poem he never finished, and the end—from which I take my picture—we only know of from a note by his wife. It is of a poet, who sought all his life for love, and at last he met a very beautiful lady, and——"

"Was he happy then?" she questioned.

"For a little while, but then she failed him, for she was only Aphrodite Pandemos; but when he was dying, the lady who could have filled his soul, Urania, kissed his lips. I'm not quite sure of the allegory being true; perhaps Shelley wasn't, and so didn't end the poem. I doubt if the man who had given himself to Venus Pandemos, like Athanase, could see Urania. But that's a question as old as the world itself," he added, rather dreamily.

Gertrude did not answer. After a little while he said—

“I want you for Urania ; in a half light like this, the moon full on her face and a dense background of dark forest ; and perhaps in one corner a glimpse of the lingering sunset light.”

“I want to be first and dearest to you always,” she said. “I do love you so ;” and the passion of her tone strangely moved her husband. He reached up towards her with a kiss, whispering, “My Star.”

CHAPTER XIII.

“Love’s feeling is more soft and sensible
Than are the tender horns of cockled snails.”

Love’s Labour’s Lost.

A DAY in October, still warm with the lingering brightness of summer, and at five o’clock in the afternoon, the sun sinking westward beyond Kensington in a splendid amber haze, which Max Breynton enjoyed as he loitered down Piccadilly, with a very vague idea as to what he meant to do.

His cogitations were cut short by his finding himself face to face with Mr. Goring. They greeted cordially, but Max

did not fail to remark that Mr. Goring looked anything but well, and had lost something of his cheerful alert manner.

"I've been to my doctor's," Mr. Goring volunteered, as Max, saying he had nothing to do, turned his way with him. "Have you heard of our plans, Breynton? Of course you haven't, though, as Roland Trench isn't in town."

"What are your plans?"

"Well, I've consulted Thompson about myself, and he says there's nothing to be alarmed about; but I need a long sea voyage to set me up again, so he has doomed us to go to Australia and back."

"Miss Goring is going with, you then?"

"Not through my fault. I tried to dissuade her, but it's of no use. She's as obstinate as—as a woman," said Mr. Goring, with a despairing conclusion; "and since she says she means to go, I suppose

she must. I don't think she can really like it, though she says she does, because I know she is fond of her life at home, and of having everything round her."

"She would be wretched if you left her," said Max.

"Yes, she is that kind of girl. If she thought she were doing a selfish thing she would be miserable, and that's what it is in this case. I wish I could think she would enjoy the voyage on her own account."

Breynton could surmise that whether Evelyn enjoyed the voyage or not, she would be very glad to leave England at present, and so escape the constant wearing pain he feared must press upon her from the sight of Roland and his wife. "She is too brave and healthy," he thought, "not to conquer it; but it will take her time."

"Have you anything special to do with yourself to-night, Breynton?" asked Mr.

Goring. "If you haven't, come home with me and dine at Kensington. I've got an order to give at a confounded outfitter's, and then we can go home together."

Max assented, though he inwardly dubbed himself a fool. She did not want to see him. Why the deuce must he always be thrusting himself in her way? But he went all the same.

Yet whether he were a fool or not he was glad of his folly when he saw her, and knew by the tone of her voice she was really pleased to see him. He looked at her timidly. He had not seen her since Roland's marriage, and he seemed to dread a possible change in her; but there was none from what he had noted during the last three months. The loss of the look of free, simple happiness her face had worn on the day he had first seen its sweetness, six months before, and what

he fancied was a haunted look in the eyes, the first shadow of which he had noted at the Academy, when she watched Roland and Gertrude Anley together. No one else could have seen the secret of Evelyn's feelings on her face; but Max's gaze was very tender as well as very keen, and he read more there than the man whom she loved, who had fancied he loved her, had ever done.

The dinner was very pleasant, and even Max, who was accustomed in his studio to rail at the refinements of social life, was by no means insensible to the serene sense of home and comfort he felt at Fainton Cottage, or the delicate grace of Evelyn's presence as she sat at the table, very fair in her clinging, softly sweeping Indian cashmere of dull fawn colour, made simply but without affectation, and with mellow-hued amber beads at her throat,

which changed all the dress to dull gold. So, too, he looked at her, as after dinner she sat near the lamp in the drawing-room, the shaded light falling brightly on her smooth head, bent a little over her work; as her hands moved quickly, tying deft knots in the Macrame lace, which was her occupation, and he thought what a fair centre she made to the warm, dim-coloured room, which expressed its mistress so well in its womanliness without femininity, and the reality without affectation of culture, as shown in its books and ornaments, and their result, rather than their arrangement.

A foreign letter arrived for Evelyn by the last post, and Max, seeing the thin flimsy envelope with the foreign stamp, knew instinctively from whom it came.

"Is that from the bride, Eve?" her father said, as she opened the letter.

"Yes, papa." Then she opened and read

it. "They are not coming back as soon as they expected," she said, after a little time. "They are so enchanted with Cannes, that they mean to stay on till the second week in November."

"And our ship leaves on the 30th of this month," said Mr. Goring. "I am sorry we shall miss them; I wanted to see Benedick—I mean Roland, the married man."

"I don't think the comparison is happy," growled Max. "Miss Anley doesn't seem much like Beatrice."

"No, there is no fear of Roland's face being predestinate as a scratched one," said Mr. Goring.

"And I never heard of Roland making any vows against marriage," said Breynton, drily. Then he remembered the meaning his words might bear to Evelyn, and hated himself as a brute who was always saying the wrong thing.

She looked up loyally and simply, and there was some spirit in her voice as she answered, "No; Roland never was affected in anything, in that way. I don't think fine natures ever are."

"That is rather sweeping," rejoined her father. "Isn't there some sea beastie, as the Scotch would call it, who has a very tender unprotected skin, and to save itself from hurt, attaches to itself stones, seaweed, sticks, etc., till it has formed a crust round itself which nothing can penetrate?"

"It must make itself very hard and ugly," said Evelyn, "and no kindness could touch it through the crust any more than cruelty would. And then, too, the sharp edges of the stones might hurt other people, who did not intend anything but good to it. I think to shut up your real self behind a false hard one is deceitful and cowardly."

"You needn't be so decided, childie," said her father. "Which are you pitching into, me or Mr. Breynton?"

"Neither," said Evelyn, with a little laugh at her own energy.

Nor had she applied her words to herself; but Max did, and they gave him a key to her conduct she herself lacked.

"I think you are right," he said. "It is a fault one is apt to fall into; but there is such a thing as wearing one's heart on one's sleeve. Don't you think that is worse?"

"Yes, because it comes from vanity instead of shyness," said Evelyn, with a quick flash of a smile.

"And shamelessness," said her father. "In women, at least."

"Don't you think it may be weakness only?" said Evelyn, rather pleadingly. It touched Max to hear her—so strong in

her own gentle dignity of womanhood, who knew so well how to suffer quietly and to herself—extenuate those women who had not her own sweet pride. A personal meaning in the talk, however, touched her, a slight quick flush rose to her cheek, and she said no more for a little while. Breyn-ton felt as if he had done her a wrong in guessing what he had done long ago, and was ashamed of and angry with himself for divulging the secret she guarded from all the world. Yet something her father said about a girl confessing an unreturned love, stirred her, nay, lit a new light in her eye.

“Why not?” she said, “if she is questioned and have to answer? She must tell the truth; it is no shame to her.” Yet while she spoke bravely and what she thought, she felt she could bear anything better than that Roland Trench should

know of her love for him. The mere thought that he might have guessed it was an agony of shame, which made her cheeks feel hot when she was alone.

"And so I shall not see you again for nearly a year," said Max, as he bid good-bye that evening. The words escaped him involuntarily, and no one could have told the strange blank feeling of imminent loss which prompted him and overpowered him as he spoke.

Mr. Goring laughed. "You don't mean to say good-bye in this cavalier fashion," he rejoined, shaking hands. "Come and see us again before we go."

Breynton did come again, and more than once. It ended by his discovering he wanted to study effects of autumn sunsets from Southampton water, and for that purpose going down to Southampton with the Gorings to see them off.

A new feeling of strong, true friendliness came to Evelyn Goring's heart as she looked at Breynton's face, as they said fare-well on board the vessel, and felt the earnest look of his green-grey eyes, and his close, hard clasp. As the bell rang, and he prepared to go, he looked at her as trying to speak, what, he hardly knew; something he could not have said, nay, would not have an' he could, to save his life, knowing as he did that another thought filled her soul.

"God keep you!" he said, suddenly and passionately, and then there was a crush and hurry, and he had to rush away without one parting word from her.

As the vessel slowly moved away from England and from him, he saw her standing by her father's side, smiling a good-bye with a faint quiver of sadness in her smile.

So he stood watching till he lost sight of her, as the vessel turned, and he left the docks, knowing the *Phené* bore away from him the dearest, deepest, most tender love of his life.

CHAPTER XIV.

“ Alas, Sir,
Think of the world, how we shall live, grow serious ;
We have been married a whole fortnight now.”

Women beware Women.

THE Trenches were back and settled in their new home by the end of November, and Roland set to work with great energy, surprised to find how little time he had before him for his Academy picture, which was rendered less by the heavy fogs that of course made their appearance in December, and put a stop to work during their continuance.

So it came to pass that one afternoon in January, when Gertrude was sitting to

him for his Urania, the strands of her bright supple hair unbound and falling in gleaming waves around her, Mr. Trench was by no means pleased to hear the parlour-maid's tap at the studio door, followed by the announcement—

“Mrs. Field, ma'am, in the drawing-room.”

Gertrude said she would be in the drawing-room in a minute. Then, as the servant went, she laughed as she twisted up her tresses in their usual heavy knot. “That's the result of sitting to you of an afternoon,” she said, bending down over her husband to kiss him.

“Yes, it's a confounded bore to be interrupted,” assented Roland.

“I mean, that when I ought to be ready for visitors, here I am with my hair like a Madge Wildfire. Are you not ashamed of yourself?”

"Oh, Mrs. Field would understand even a more desperate state of things," said Roland. "She has sat to Field often enough."

"Are you coming in to see her, Roland?"

"Can't you do without me?" said Roland, with rather a wistful glance at the canvas before him. "It seems a pity to lose what little daylight remains."

"Yes," said Gertrude, "I will tell her; but if she stays, come in to tea in half an hour; it will be too late for you to paint then."

Gertrude looked once at her hair in the mirror, to be certain that it was right, though she had coiled it up with an easy, swift assurance of effect; and then she left the studio for the drawing-room, where she found her visitor.

Mrs. Field had only just come to town,

after a round of country house visiting ; and after inquiries and replies of the usual order, Gertrude made her apologies for Roland, saying he did not like to lose the daylight.

"I quite understand. His work was thrown rather behindhand," said Mrs. Field, with a fine smile.

"Yes, so I must try to make him amends, and not let him lose any more time," answered Gertrude.

"You are a very good wife, not to be jealous of his work."

"I should be a very bad one if I were," said Gertrude. "It is my great pride. I should never forgive myself if I took up his time or hindered his making a name."

"He is sure to succeed," said Mrs. Field, "if only there is no falling off in his next picture. My husband said the *Lamia* was quite wonderful for so young a man, and if this one be equal to it——"

"I think that is Roland's one fault," answered his wife. "He is so fastidious. He says this next picture won't do, unless it is a great deal better than the Lamia, and so he worries himself and gets depressed."

"I think it is a mistake," returned her visitor, sapiently, "to aim at too much ; but your belief in him will help him."

"I hope so," said Gertrude, with a little flush and smile. "I am very silly to be so proud, but I cannot help it."

To this succeeded inquiries from Mrs. Trench as to what Mr. Field was working on ; and Gertrude learnt from his wife that he had seven pictures on hand for the Academy, besides two or three others. Then Mrs. Field admired the Trenches' house, very honestly ; for modest as its adornment and size were, compared with those of the Fields' lordly pleasure house,

yet Gertrude had made her home very pretty, and her drawing-room, with the wood fire burning brightly on the hearth between tiles which Roland had painted, and with the scent and sweetness of flowers filling the air, looked very charming and individual on this bitter January day. There were really beautiful things in the room; some, wedding presents; others, "little elegant extravagances" mutually committed by Mr. Trench and his wife. Roland was better able than Gertrude to appreciate the delicate strength of old *répousse* work, the dim harmonious gorgeousness of antique *cloisonné*. The difference in the matter between him and her was, that he liked a few such things in a room, so that the eye did not become confused with the multitude of objects to be gazed at, but could readily fall on any one and rest on it with pleasure; while to Gertrude they were household gods.

There were some really good sketches on the walls, chiefly wedding presents to Roland from artist friends. These, of course, were duly admired by Mrs. Field ; and when the waning light led to the introduction of afternoon tea and the lamp, Roland entered and greeted Mrs. Field cordially, and as he took possession of an arm-chair and a cup of tea, he enjoyed, in a lazy manner, the contrast between the guest's "rich eastern look," dark, clear skin, *pâle comme un beau soir d'automne*, and thick, crisped, black hair, and Gertrude's beauty, which always reminded her husband of sun-rays, and new-born tea-roses smitten with a rosy flush at their fragrant cores, and the lissomeness of her figure's long flowing lines.

When Mrs. Field had gone, Roland drew a little nearer the fire, staring into its red caverns with indolent, rather sad

eyes. His wife came and sat at his feet on a stool, leaning her head up backward, so that the gaze of her eyes met his, and he smiled.

"Yes," she said, *apropos*, it seemed, of nothing. "What were you thinking of?"

"Why should I trouble you with the old grumbles?"

"I thought you told me I had banished them. Why won't you believe more in yourself, dear?"

"Because I do so badly. I had to paint out all I did yesterday."

"Oh, Roland! when I was out of the way," said his wife, half in fun, half in earnest reproach. "You are just like a naughty child, who can't be trusted alone; and it was so pretty!"

"Yes, that's just it; it was pretty."

"Now, don't be ironical, because I never understand that. But you really won't

get your picture finished, if you go on like this."

"Perhaps that would be all the better. There's quite another year's work to do to it."

"Roland!" in a tone of mock exasperation. "But you don't mean that. Oh, I couldn't bear it. I am looking so forward to seeing it, and knowing what people think."

A slight cloud crossed his brow, but she did not see it.

"Have you set your heart on it, child?" he asked.

"Of course I have. What do I care about but you and your success?"

He knew that success to him and his wife did not mean the same thing. He had learnt that already; nay, he had learnt it before his marriage, and had tried gently to alter her views on the point, but she

did not seem able to understand quite what he felt, and he trusted to years, and a closer knowledge and love of art, teaching her what she at present lacked in her ideas of the true end and aim of artistic labour. Besides, it seemed ungracious always to dash her sweet womanly pleasure in the anticipation of his fame, by telling her that it showed a want in her to desire this for him.

"My lord," said Gertrude, that evening after dinner.

"My lady."

"Don't you think it would be a good plan for us to have an evening in the week?"

Roland stared. Then, as her meaning dawned on him, his face hardly showed that ready acquiescence and delight which might have been expected. "What put that into your head?" he asked, laughing. "Was it Mrs. Field?"

"Don't you think me capable of originating it?" said Gertrude. "I have often thought it would suit us very well, though you don't seem to agree," she added, with a sweet laugh at his perplexed face. "You know we must see people now and then."

"Stop," said Roland. "I know if I give you your premises, you will forge a chain of links of adamant. I demur. Why must we see people?—by which I suppose you mean ask them here formally, instead of letting them drop in when they like?"

"And interrupt everything, and hinder your work—just what you don't like; besides, that wouldn't do."

"But why must we have parties? For that's what it comes to. We haven't enough money."

"Then you must paint a pot-boiler now and then." Roland took this as a jest, and laughed. "I don't know what you wish,

but I don't want to be a hermit ; and we can't accept people's invites, except we ask them back, in some way ; and the first evening I ever saw you, you abused big crushes ; now didn't you ? ”

“ True, O queen ; for those who go to them, not for those who give them. I am beginning to think there was some sound philosophy in the opinion you expressed that night, that it was better to have all the people at once, and have done with them.”

“ I didn't mean it like that ; and you spoke about expense—do you know what a big crush costs ? ”

“ No more than twenty small ones, I should think.”

“ Yes, it does ; one has to do it in quite a different way ; an evening would cost hardly anything. Are you convinced ? ”

“ That you argue very well ; but you

have left out one thing, sweetheart—it would be such a deuced bore. An evening every week, besides going out to all the people who come! Why, I shall never have you to myself.”

But though Roland's last words pleased his wife, she did not give up her scheme, which she was much wedded to. Before her marriage she had seen but little of artistic and literary society of the more “cliquey” nature, and since then there had arisen in her a certain ambition to be one of the queens of the new world in which she found herself. There were many sovereigns already, each powerful by the right of her own fascinations and her husband's name, the wives of painters whose pictures were more widely known and fetched bigger prices than Roland Trench's could yet hope to do. Yet Gertrude's hope of reigning pre-eminent

did not seem too ambitious. She was young, very beautiful, gifted with rare social charm and perfect breeding; a woman whose strong toil of grace should surely be able to capture for her what she wished. Her husband's fame, when he won it, would cast a reflected glory on her, and the girl, who had been but a unit in her own social circle before her marriage, longed earnestly for freedom in the new set she now found herself in. She liked the flavour of an artistic coterie, and felt it suited her better and made a better framework for her rather peculiar picturesque grace, than did the ordinary round of Philistine society.

So Gertrude had her evening in the week, and the Trenches' Thursdays were very successful, and enjoyed both by the Philistines and the children of sweetness and light who congregated in the large

studio and pretty drawing-room at 20, Bolingbroke Road, South Kensington ; and all Gertrude's guests agreed, what Roland would certainly have assented to, that Trench was very lucky in his wife.

He certainly had no need to complain of any lack of appreciation in her, or at least of any lack of faith in his power. She believed firmly in him, and when her prophecies were realized, and the "Athanase" was pronounced one of the pictures of the year, her graceful pride and pleasure in the congratulations she received on her husband's success—her enjoyment of the gushing, as of the more discriminating critiques of it—were very charming and real.

The picture was a true success, in that it was an advance, and as vigorous in execution as it was in conception. Max Breyn-ton wondered chiefly at the Urania's face. The traits were Gertrude's ; but had

Roland Trench ever seen on his wife's face the tender glory, the sweet sadness of noblest love, which shone on the countenance which bent over the dying Athanase, irradiating his face by its reflection, and changing its sad, though utter peace, to a passion of joy. If Roland saw his wife's face like this, no wonder he had been indignant when Max had hinted it was a countenance one might tire of.

Breynton himself did not seem to know Mrs. Trench much better than he had before his friend's marriage. He was still frightened of her, as a fashionable woman ; was awkward, nervous and shy, and therefore gruff in her presence ; and never felt cordial, in spite of her advances towards him. Indeed, they only seemed to make him shrink more deeply into his shell. He could not understand her, any more than she could understand him ; the outer self

of manners, which masks all the individuals who would achieve social success, repelled Breynton, as the simple truth joined with as simple a reserve had attracted him in Evelyn. Still he was glad his friend seemed happy; very glad of his picture being so good.

And meantime, for **himself**, he waited and counted the months, the weeks, the days that must pass before Evelyn Goring returned to England. It was not often he knowingly let his thoughts dwell on her. If he found them doing so, he would strive to drive them away from the subject by an inward "Pshaw!" and breaking forth in snatches of song over his work of an ultra unsentimental and incongruous description, such as—

"Says Giles, 'Tis mortal hard to go,
But if so bees I must,
I means to follow arter he
As goes himself the fust."

CHAPTER XV.

"Oh, poet woman, none foregoes
The leap, attaining the repose."

MRS. BROWNING, *Vision of Poets*.

"When next we meet I will salute thee fairly,
And pray the gods to give thee happy days."

Maid's Tragedy.

"I WISH you were going, Miss Goring, I am sure it will be fun."

Evelyn turned her bright face to the speaker, a young fellow on board the vessel in which Miss Goring and her father were returning to England. The vessel was now anchored in Cape Town harbour. It was the third week in August, and the Gorings had been away from England ten months, and the girl was very glad to think

that another month would see them again settled at Fainton Cottage.

The cure of the long sea voyage and Australian visit had been completely successful in Mr. Goring's case: he was very different to what he had been when he and Evelyn left England. He sauntered up now, as Evelyn was answering young Marsden's remark, set down at the beginning of this chapter, and which had its origin in his regret over Evelyn's having twisted her ankle the day before, and thus being unable to join the rest of the passengers, who had arranged to attend the performance at the Cape Town theatre that night in a body.

"I wish I could," she said. "It was very foolish of me to twist my foot, and as it is, I don't believe it would do it any harm, if I went."

"But I do," said her father. "Marsden,

I won't have you inciting my daughter to mutiny. You know, the doctor says, she must lay up for a day or two. I think I shall stay on board, Eve, and take care of you."

"Oh, papa, please don't! I am looking to you to bring me the only reliable account of the performance."

"What a slur on my reputation," said young Marsden. "Since you can't trust me as a reporter, Miss Goring, may I stay with you?"

Eve shook her head and laughed.

"I wouldn't let you do it on any account," she said, with a quaint simplicity, which checked the young man's attempts to look sentimental, far more effectually than any snubbing or self-consciousness on her part would have done. "I know you would be longing to be at the theatre all the time. Why! it was you started the idea."

Which being true, Marsden could but hold his peace.

“Eve, here is something to amuse you,” said her father, just before the party for the theatre started for shore. “Grey has brought these on board, the last *Cornhill* and *Punch* and the *Globe* of the day before the mail sailed. Isn’t it a luxury to have news only three weeks old?”

Evelyn thanked him, and when the boats had started for shore with the measured splash of the oars, she leant back on the seat arranged for her with cushions, so that she could lean and look over the vessel’s side, at the clear, green water, purple where lay the shadows of the ships in the harbour, and of the mountains clasping the bay.

She was nearly the only passenger left on deck. Most of those who had not gone on shore had retreated to the saloon, where

those of them who were elderly gentlemen were engaged in whist, and two or three ladies were enjoying a whispering feast of ship-board gossip. Some affectionate mothers had retired with their children to the privacy of their own cabins, and from some region or another the faint and doleful notes of a flute spoke of the determined resolution of a musical amateur.

Eve glanced at the *Cornhill*, then at *Punch*, then turned to gaze again at the deep water and the mountains lying along the coast on the right, looking towards the town, and the couchant lion and the flattened outline of Table Mount on the left. The bay was very calm, the sunset hues tinging the lazy circling surface curves of the water with pearl and opal tints of rose and palest amber. With a little sigh she turned her eyes away at last, and took up the *Globe*, dated July 21st. She found

in it a final review of the Academy exhibition for that year, summing up its features, and dwelling again on the leading pictures. Evelyn's eye fell on the name of Roland Trench, and she knew by the sudden passionate leap of her heart that the old feeling—which during her stay in Australia she had tried to believe she was forgetting, the thought of which had haunted her more and more as she drew nearer England—this feeling still ruled her life.

Yet she had fancied she had done her best. She had tried to cure herself, first, by dwelling on the thought of her love and striving to conquer it, then by bending her thoughts away from Roland. Was it all to no purpose? She was very restless to-night; she felt she must read this criticism of the "Athanasie," as she had read all the notices of it which had reached Australia before her father and she had left Melbourne.

She read it, dwelt on every word of praise, pondered over the last sentence.

“What so hopefully distinguishes Mr. Trench from most of our young painters is the aspiration of his work. Were it not for this, this constant and visible endeavour towards the highest, we should be inclined to pronounce his genius too early matured for the future fame and labours of the artist ; but there is so strongly expressed in all he does, the search after the Urania, which Shelley’s lady typifies, that we cannot help believing she will appear to him not in death, but in life.”

Had Evelyn’s heart any right to swell with a pure, intense pleasure, overmastering all personal pain ? Right or wrong, it did, reading this assurance of her own faith.

She turned the page and glanced at the births’, marriages’ and deaths’ column, and then she saw the one line—

"On the 19th inst., at 20, Bolingbroke Road, South Kensington, the wife of Roland Trench, Esq." That was all.

Her heart stood still—the first feeling was a wild, mad rush of joy. All was not lost!

Then came a terrible revulson of horror, wild self-loathing for that thought, which had sprung unbidden up within her. She knew now that deep within her heart, hidden even from herself, had lain a wish of hope of Gertrude Trench's death; else why this sudden, horrible joy, which had leapt up swiftly as a flame, to be quenched in the blackness which seemed to surround her now: which made the wide, calm water, the strength of the hills, the wonderful silence of the skies, as a dream to the girl, who sat there with sealed lips, vacant, open eyes, and tightly clenched hands; smitten to the heart by the sudden know-

ledge of herself that hour had revealed to her.

She felt the sin of blood-guiltiness on her soul. This secret, half-unconscious hope she had nourished was now fulfilled in awful punishment of itself. Oh, God ! if she could have given back Gertrude Trench's life at the cost of her own, she would have thrown the latter down "as frankly as a pin." That would be easier far, than to go through life with this strange, ghastly sense of murder pressing her down. She felt numb under this burden of a guilty thought now revealed to her sight. Her heart's desire was given her in vengeance upon her sin.

A sin but in thought ; only a vague wish not knowingly entertained or made welcome. What comfort was that to a girl pure and proud, who, had the idea that such a hope lurked within her heart been

suggested to her a moment before, would have answered, "Is thy servant a dog, that she should do this thing?"

Evelyn never knew how long she sat there staring blankly at the outline of the mountains, growing darker against the flushed sky, at the lucent water, darkening with the evening shadows. It was not as time, it was as some dreadful moment of eternity, yet that scene of Table Bay as she beheld it then seemed branded into her brain.

In that moment Evelyn Goring knew she had never really wrestled with her love with all her might. It was so dear and precious to her, she had never striven to cast it from her. If she had done so, there might have been a wearier dulness of life for a time, a blanker loneliness deprived of the sweet bitter fancies of the might have been, but she would have been

spared this, which she had never known before—remorse.

At last she took up the *Globe* again, with the dim, wretched hope there might be a mistake. No—yes.

There was a mistake, utter and complete. She never noticed that in the *Globe* the “births” are printed with the headings “Sons” or “Daughters” above the column, so that the under announcements, being without any further recognition of the facts they notify, may easily be taken at a glance for the notice of a death, rather than a birth. The line on which Evelyn’s eyes had fallen did not tell of Gertrude Trench’s death, but of the birth of hers and Roland’s child. The mistake had its comic, even its farcical side perhaps, but Evelyn did not feel that now.

“Thank God! thank God!”

That was the only thought in her mind,

an infinite and blessed relief that this load she had felt too heavy to be borne was lifted from her.

All a mistake! True; but a mistake which left her humbled in her own eyes, though content and most thankful. All the baser and selfish part of her love for Roland seemed to have been burnt and purged away during the time she had sat there alone.

A little time! It might have been so, she could not measure it; but she knew that now she could meet Roland and his wife without feeling treacherous to him or Gertrude or herself. The passionate glad relief burst to her lips in a long, low, subdued laugh, and another "Thank God!" came brokenly from her.

So she sat by the deck side, while the sunset hues faded away before the swiftly falling tropical night, and the eye could

gaze further into the soft depths of the sky, now bright with the innumerable stars. A great peace filled the girl's soul, such a peace as she had not known since she had watched the dawning of Roland's and Gertrude's love. The heart felt hushed by the silent calm of the sea and sky; she knew her weakness now, and so was stronger against it than she had ever been. The short, fierce purgatory she had endured had accomplished what she had dreaded as a weary, lingering fight.

She raised her eyes to the wide heavens, where amid the million brightness glittered the Southern Cross. *In hoc signo vinces*; in this sign of self-renunciation, of all love, all faith, and of a loftier hope than joy.

CHAPTER XVI.

“And passing fair the type must seem,
Unknown the presence and the dream.
'Tis she : though of herself, alas !
Less than her shadow on the grass,
Or than her image in the stream.”

ROSSETTI, *The Portrait*.

“THE Gorings are back, Gertrude,” said Roland Trench one morning at breakfast. “I met Goring at the club last night, and he said they had been in London ten days.”

“And Evelyn has never written to tell me,” answered Gertrude. “I think she has behaved very badly. Never mind, I shall go and see her to-day,” she continued,

as she poured out the coffee. "I wonder how she is."

"Very much better I expect than you are, after grilling in London all this time. Gertrude, I wish to goodness you would go down to Vaneholm or the sea or——"

"Anywhere, anywhere out of your world," said Mrs. Trench. "You are not going to get rid of me so easily. When you take your holiday I'll take mine."

Roland sighed. "I don't know when I shall get my work finished," he began.

"I don't want change," said his wife. "You know I am as well as possible. You look far more out of sorts than I do."

"Interesting invalid," rejoined Roland, "I must finish what I'm working on. That confounded season threw me back. I hardly did a touch I hadn't to paint out again; and as it is, if we are blessed with

the usual fogs, I shall be awfully behind-hand."

"Yes," Gertrude answered thoughtfully, stirring her spoon round in her cup. "I won't press you to leave your work, for I know I should be wrong if I did; but it is a great pity—we should have enjoyed it so."

Something in his wife's lovely face, with the fair curves of the drooped eyelids beneath the even brows, caused a sudden thrill of longing in Roland for the sweet rest and gloom of the green woods, with the filtered sunlight lying golden on the tree stems, and the banks lush with moss and ivy; or for the summer splendour of the sea. True, August was already passed, but the summer warmth still lingered. He must enjoy it with Gertrude before it faded, and have a short spell of the sweet leisure he had longed for all through the rush and scramble of gaiety, in the midst of

which he—sorely against his will—had found himself from January to June. Then the baby had come, and it was late in August before he had settled to his work.

It was now mid-September. Why waste life in this brick-walled London, during the two or three weeks which yet remained of thick-leaved trees and warm sunlight ?

“ Hang work ! ” he said. “ We’ll go down to Kent together, Gertrude ; not to Vaneholm—there is sure to be a crowd of people there—but to a small place I know of, where we can have our honeymoon over again ; only with the brat to make fun for us.”

Gertrude shook her head.

“ If we did go away, and didn’t go to Vaneholm, mamma would never forgive us,” she answered, emphatically. “ Besides, I’m not going to let you be lazy, after we resolved to stay here through the dead

season, especially that you might work. Can't you bear it with me?" she added, as she came round to his side with his second cup of coffee.

"I want to make love to you again in wood and lanes," he said, putting his arm round her.

"Then you must be contented to make love in London, if you have not forgotten how to do it," she returned. "And later on, when you've broken the back of your work, we'll go down to Vaneholm for the shooting."

Keen sportsman as Roland was, the idea of a November visit to a country house, crammed with guests, did not in his present mood seem to fill him with rapture. That feeling which comes on us all at times, of passionate longing for the serene sweetness of Nature's look, mastered him just now; he felt an intolerant hatred

of the red-brick house opposite ; of the bleached hot pavement ; even of the poor, newly-planted little limes which strove to maintain a wretched existence where they were established at intervals along the footway.

"The reverse is quite as true," he muttered, as he stood by the window after breakfast.

"What do you mean ?" asked Gertrude.

"Nothing. I was only thinking of what Coleridge said about our receiving but what we give, and Nature living in our life. We never give back as much as we receive."

"In art ?"

"Yes ; we are poor creatures, if we are not refreshed each time we fall by the touch of our Mother's breast.

Roland's remark was certainly slightly trite, but for his wife it had no significance whatever, and then with a sigh he went to

his studio, and she to her household cares. About an hour later she came into the studio in her walking dress, and stood behind Roland's chair, watching him paint. At last she said—

"I'm going out on a shopping expedition, Roland, and then I shall go and look up Evelyn Goring, so I mayn't be back to lunch. I've sent our lord and master out for his walk with nurse."

"And leave your slave here," said Roland. "Can you spare me five minutes, dear? Just hold your hand like that—so."

"What do you mean to call it?" said Gertrude, when, her husband having released her, she returned to her old position.

The picture was a half-length study of a girl in a white robe leaning against a tangled background of ivy, the darkness of which threw out the shine of her hair. The picture was fine in drawing, charming

in colour and sweetness of touch, and entirely contented Gertrude's eyes.

"Anything," answered Roland. "Imogen, Ariadne, Panthea,—any name will do equally well or ill."

"What an unsatisfactory person you are," said Gertrude. "She is lovely; the whole picture is lovely. It must be so, or you would never get the price for it that you will. I shall try to bring Evelyn back, to see if she can't put you into conceit with it."

"Do you think any one would succeed where you failed?" asked Roland, turning round with a look strangely melancholy and painful in his eyes, although he smiled as he spoke. "But honestly, does it mean anything to you?"

"Yes, a beautiful girl. I shall have to quote those two lines you are so fond of.

'Tell them, dear, if eyes were made for seeing,
Then beauty is its own excuse for being.'

"Beauty—yes," said Roland.

"I haven't time to hear a lecture on æsthetics, though I should like it. By the way, I want to go to those lectures on Greek art: you don't mind?"

"Mind!—but I shouldn't have thought you cared."

"Of course I do. And then I know I am so horribly ignorant, though I love art, and I don't want to discredit you."

"For heaven's sake, dearest, then don't talk art cant."

She laughed, only adding, as she went out of the door, "Nearly every one we know of the art set is going."

"And will all chatter the same shibboleth," thought Roland, disgustedly, as he returned to his work. The insipid grace of it struck him with a sharp annoyance. If Evelyn Goring came he knew his indefinite young lady would not approve herself to her

eyes. But as he took up his brush again, a change came over the spirit of his work.

"As fast the happy moments flew,
Its beauty mounted to his brain."

He had painted quickly and fervently for a long time, forgetting how time passed, when a knock at the street door of the studio roused him. He went to open it, and admitted Max Breynton.

"You back, old fellow?" he said. "I thought you were in Arran, or thereabouts."

"So I was yesterday. I came up by last night's mail. I thought I would look you up, but I hardly expected to find you in town. How are Mrs. Trench and the baby?" said Max, suddenly remembering what was expected of him, and speaking with a curious stiff formality most unlike himself, which he always showed in alluding to Gertrude, and which Roland rightly ascribed to shyness.

"Flourishing," returned Roland. "You'll stay to lunch, won't you? I don't know if Gertrude will be in; she has gone to see Evelyn Goring. Did you know they were back?"

"No!" Max usually had his face well under control, but for one moment it was alive with such a look as startled Roland. "How is Goring?" Breynton continued, in the ordinary tone of friendly interest.

"Oh, he looks ten years younger," said Roland. "I haven't seen Evelyn yet——"

"What are you working on?" interrupted Max. "Oh, you've taken up that young woman again," in a not particularly delighted tone. "Halloo, though! What have you been doing to her?"

"Nothing that I know of, except painting on it. Do you think I've done any good?" But Roland, as he stepped back, saw his question answered. The work of his

hands looked at him very differently to what she had done two hours before.

"It's a picture now," said Max. "That's all, instead of a book of beauty—" pot boiler was the thought in his own mind. "The face does mean something. What do you call it?" he added aloud.

The name sprang as by an inspiration to Roland's lips, brought there by the thought which had guided his hand during the morning.

"Castara."

It was the right name for the tender, deep-eyed maiden, with the pure lips and serious sweetness of face.

"She looks like it; but who was the lady?"

"The heroine of Habington's poems. You think it will wash, then?"

"Yes, I like it, though I don't think it's up to some of your work." Then he looked

at it again. "Do you know," he said at last, "you've made it awfully like Miss Goring? The eyes are hers to the life."

He spoke in a curious, musing tone, grave and simple. Roland, who had turned away, looked round; but Max was gazing at Castara's clear eyes; and suddenly a thought came to Roland, born of Max's last words and his intent, quiet look.

He pooh-poohed it as a fancy. If he had analyzed his own mind, he might have found there an irrational distaste to the idea of Max being in love with Evelyn; but he did not probe as deep as that, and contented himself by considering his fancy as absurd.

CHAPTER XVII.

“La médiocrité qui ne comprend rien qu'elle.”

ALFRED DE MUSSET, *Sur la Paresse*.

“EVELYN!”

Eve turned round. She was in rather a perilous position on the top of a high flight of steps, employed in arranging some china on a high shelf in Fainton Cottage. She had devoted the morning to rearranging her newly disinterred household treasures after their year's burial in cupboards, and making her room return to its former self.

A real, quick thrill of pleasure, mingled with some subtler feeling, shot through her

as she heard Gertrude Trench's voice, and saw her standing at the doorway. There was still a pain at Evelyn's heart, but it was that of a wound which is healing healthily, not festering in secret.

"Gertrude! How good of you to come so soon," she said, quickly dismounting, and returning Mrs. Trench's embrace almost as warmly as it was given, as Gertrude said affectionately, "It is so nice to see you again."

"You cannot have wanted me much," said Evelyn, with a sweet laugh and slight flush.

"Why not?" asked Gertrude: a vague, graceful shyness seeming to Evelyn's fancy to hang on her like the bloom on the peach. The girl could see from her look and smile that Roland's wife was happy, most happy in him, and something made her for a moment cling to Gertrude

with a nervous, tense affection, which, quiet as it was, puzzled Mrs. Trench ; it was so unlike Evelyn's usual manner.

"You will stay to lunch, won't you, Gertrude?" said Evelyn, when greetings and inquiries had been exchanged, and the life of the last year had been reviewed in brief. "It will be a picnic, bread and honey and a melon. Father is out."

"But I shall be in your way."

"Do you think we have seen too much of each other of late? It's so warm ; we will have lunch in the garden, if you don't mind."

"Oh, charming ! I wish we could be as Arcadian as you are, Evelyn. We have a square plot of green at the back, but it's only use is to clear the crowd at an afternoon tea."

Evelyn left the room for a moment, to wash her hands, her morning's labours

having made them exceedingly dusty. When she came back she found Mrs. Trench leaning against the window frame, her supple figure well posed, her dress falling so gracefully, that Evelyn's eyes could not help delighting in the smooth lines of the folds of some soft, rich stuff of pale brownish-red. Miss Goring felt that there was a change in Gertrude since she had seen her last on her wedding day. It might be chiefly the outward working of that deep and subtle change from maiden to wife, which no one marks and feels in a woman as quickly as does a girl friend; but there were differences in her easier to define. She was handsomer if anything; the coils of her rich hair were more gracefully knotted at the back of the fine head, and there was a certain artistic air in her dress, which, however, still bore the outward and visible sign of the

inward and spiritual grace of Parisian inspiration.

The two women had a very pleasant lunch under the large lime-tree in the garden, and chatted over most of their outward lives since they had met. "But how is it you are in London at this time of the year?" said Evelyn, when the meal was nearly concluded.

Gertrude explained.

"And so you have had no summer. What a pity!"- said Evelyn.

"I had a very hard summer indeed," answered Mrs. Trench. "I never realized how much cause mamma has for her groans before. Dora stayed with us during a good part of the season, and altogether, though I enjoyed a good deal, I felt worn out; and housekeeping is horribly expensive; and we have so little money, especially now that baby has come.

Roland must work hard, poor boy, there is no help for it."

"Has he become lazy," asked Evelyn.

"No, I don't mean that; but you know the way he works. He told me that if he sat up late he couldn't paint the next morning; and certainly whatever he did the morning after we had been late home he nearly always painted out, however pretty it was. Then he will have a model for three hours, and all he will have done at the end will be two or three rough charcoal studies of her arm or neck."

Evelyn was silent. She did not feel she had a right to say anything; but a little vague, faint fear seemed subtly coiling itself about her heart.

"I don't believe he need fidget so," said Gertrude. "He is so nervous about his work; at least, never contented with it. I

don't think he has sufficient trust in his own power."

"Perhaps it is that he believes in it, and so doesn't want to do anything below its level," was all Evelyn answered.

"That is too deep for me," said Gertrude, shaking her head. "But I do hope they will make him an Associate soon."

Evelyn felt so very little interest in this last aspiration, that she did not answer.

"I don't believe they will, though," continued Mrs. Trench, "while he only sends in one picture every year, and that one not very large. Mr. Field told me it was a mistake."

"I don't think it is," said Evelyn, valiantly, though it cost her a great deal to say it.

"Well, come and see my lord and his work for yourself," said Gertrude. "Won't

you and Mr. Goring come and dine with us to-night?"

"Father dines out at his club," Evelyn began; but Gertrude stopped her.

"Oh, charming! You can come back with me then this afternoon."

Evelyn offered no objection, and an hour or two later she and Mrs. Trench started for Bolingbroke Road. It so happened that Max had yielded to Roland's wish, and stayed there to lunch, and the two men were sitting in the studio, enjoying an afternoon smoke, as Roland said, like old times, when the door opened and admitted Gertrude and Evelyn.

Roland sprang up, so did Max, with a sudden flash of pleasure in his eyes, which no one noticed; and he stood silent, while his friend and Evelyn greeted. For one moment there rose up in Evelyn's mind, despite her self-conquest, a sudden surging

swell of old memories, passionate and sweet and bitter, as she felt Roland's hand-grasp and looked at her eyes. She turned to Max, and he had no word to greet her with, the feeling of her presence was so intense; but he held her hand for a moment, and felt as though the September sunshine were that of May.

"Isn't it delightful, my having brought her back?" said Gertrude. "Mr. Goring was out, so we left a note of explanation for him, instead of his daughter!"

"I can hardly yet believe it really is Eve," said Roland, looking at her with the smile which of old had caused a curious quiver of exquisite pain through Evelyn's heart. Then there were a few disjointed sentences, and Mrs. Trench wanted to carry Evelyn off upstairs, to show her that prodigy of humanity—the baby. As they were leaving the room, Max Breynton held out his hand, as if to say good-bye.

"Oh, don't go, Mr. Breynton!" said Gertrude, warmly. "I thought you would stay to dinner. We have seen so little of you of late."

She did not care much for Max, but she always wished to charm. She knew he was abrupt, and not particularly agreeable in his manners, with a certain caustic dryness in his talk, which was alien to her liking. But it had never occurred to her but that he considered Roland singularly fortunate in his wife. She was one of those women who never question the fact that they are winning to all men; and this, not from vanity, but from the certain knowledge of the fact that they are charming to nineteen men out of twenty. So why should the taste of the twentieth be different to that of his fellows? If any one had told her Max's abruptness and short answers arose partly from shy-

ness, she would never have doubted that a determination on her part to be especially gracious and sweet to him would at once dispel his feeling. The idea that Max had weighed her in his own mind and found her wanting would not have entered her head.

In the present case Max hesitated what to answer, and Roland interrupted.

"I'll make him stay, Gertrude ; so make haste to show Evelyn your new toy, and come down to us again."

"What time is it?—Five ! Ring for tea, will you, Roland ? We'll have it in here, if you and Mr. Breynton wish to finish your smoke."

"What a pretty house !" said Evelyn, as she followed Gertrude through the passage into the square hall—warm, yet subdued in colour, with polished floor, Persian rugs, curtains hung before all the doors, and the

prints of Rethel's Danse Macabre hung on the staircase wall.

"*Comme ça, comme ça,*" returned Gertrude, shrugging her shoulders. "There is a dreadful amount of things to be done. Oh, Evelyn! you should see the Dalrymples' new house, it is too lovely! It has disgusted me with ours. The very window frames are works of art."

"I don't think you need envy them."

"But I do. I break the tenth commandment every time I call there. What are you thinking of, dear? I see there is something."

"I don't know if I can express what I mean."

"Please try to, for my sake. I can never make you give an opinion — it's your only fault."

"It isn't an opinion," said Evelyn; "only a feeling. I do think it is so

much more beautiful to begin to make a house together, as you and Roland have done." She spoke the last words in a low tone, almost of reverence, as though fearing to touch with a slight hand that strange and holy mystery of double yet united love and life. "Everything must mean so much more, than if you had married a man who had done his great work, or part of it, before he ever saw you, like the Dalrymples and others. You know she is his second wife. She came into all his life when it was made. It was his first wife struggled up the hill with him, and believed in him when no one else did. Oh, Gertrude, you are much happier!"

There was so beautiful a shining in Evelyn's eyes; so sweet a look on her mouth, and such earnestness in her voice, as touched Gertrude, so that she turned

and kissed her. "I am so glad to have you again, dear!" she said; "you understand me so much better than any one else. Still," she added laughingly, "it is a very mean feeling to confess; but, as that actress says about the other actress's dresses in the novel, the Dalrymples' house is very lovely, and Mrs. Dalrymple's eye always aggravates me whenever she calls here. I feel she is mentally criticising my taste, and I know quite as well as she does what is pretty; and, if I had the means, I could show it."

Evelyn was amused, taking it partly as a joke, and thinking it directed against two or three ladies of their common acquaintance, whose favourite social pastime seemed to be "beggar my neighbour" in a rival accumulation of household gods in the shape of curios, and in fitting shrines in their honour.

"Come and perform your devotions to the fetish," said Gertrude, leading the way to the bedroom. "There he is!"

In a cot, amidst a mass of soft whiteness, lay a human snowflake, very tiny, and very fast asleep. There was both pride and fondness in Gertrude's face as she bent over her child; but it lacked that strange mother look, which makes the plainest woman beautiful when bending over her infant, even as the musician is transfigured by the passion of his art.

Evelyn was not fond of promiscuous babies; but something in this tiny thing's entire rest touched her strangely, and she stood looking at it till Gertrude told her to come down-stairs—tea must be ready.

The afternoon and evening wore away pleasantly and calmly in outward seeming, though Evelyn felt as though she were in

a dream. She would not realize all this new life fully—this new life which seemed to have robbed her of part of hers. Still this evening did much to the quieting even of vague regrets, as a reality often does. That passionate despair of Heine's often-quoted poem of four lines, had often enough found an echo in her heart a little while ago ; but now there seemed very little to bear, and Roland, thank God, was happy.

And Max ? he knew there was no hope for him yet. How should there be, when the last time she had seen him he had been nothing to her, and had known that another image had filled her heart ? He could wait : he had waited ; he had never, till within a year ago, dreamed of the thought which now would rise within him.

“Poor, bad tempered, getting on in

life," thought Max, with a curt laugh, as he sauntered homeward that night—"with no manners, no looks, and no chance of making a name for myself now, even if I wished to, which I don't. I'm a nice fellow to think of her! Precious likely it is she'd care for me, even if she had never known Roland. Oh, d—n it all, and me for a fool!"

END OF VOL. I.



